

ALLEGHANY COUNTY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN



*Preserving and Protecting Our Agricultural
Heritage and Future*

November 2013

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....4

Introduction to the Farmland Preservation Plan.....5

Executive Summary.....7

A Need for Action.....9

Challenges and Opportunities.....12

Farmland Protection Toolbox.....20

Recommendations, Implementation, Timeline.....24

Appendix A: References.....31

Appendix B: 2007 Census of Agriculture.....32

Appendix C: Promotions, Meetings, Surveys and Interviews.....34

Appendix D: Allegheny Volunteer Agricultural District Ordinance.....41

Appendix E: Stanly County Criteria for Preservation.....55

Appendix F: Prime and Important Farmland57

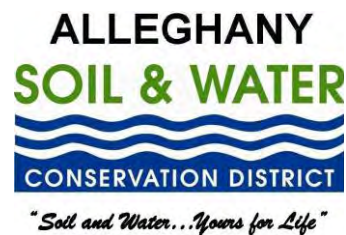
Appendix G: Potential Funding Sources62

Appendix H: Informational and Other Sources66

**This project received support from the
N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland
Preservation Trust Fund**



**Matching funding was secured from
Alleghany County Government, Alleghany Soil and Water District,
Alleghany Farm Bureau and Carolina Farm Credit**



Acknowledgements

The Alleghany County Farmland Preservation Plan was compiled and written by Bob Edwards. Bob was reared on a farm in Alleghany and served the agricultural community for 28.5 years as the Cooperative Extension Agricultural Agent and County Director. Bob holds a Bachelor's degree from Appalachian State University, a Master's degree from N.C. State University and completed several hours toward a PhD. He retired in June, 2009 (his 35th year anniversary) after serving 6.5 years as a District Director for North Cooperative Extension at NC State University.

Thanks to the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund for its generous financial support, as well as the Alleghany County Board of Commissioners, Alleghany Farm Bureau, Carolina Farm Credit and the Alleghany County Soil & Water Conservation Service. Special thanks are extended to the Alleghany County Farmland Preservation Committee and the farmers and landowners in Alleghany County who participated in surveys, interviews and meetings, as well as, the previously developed Farmland Preservation Plans in North Carolina and other states.

Additionally, thanks are extended to the following agencies, groups and individuals:

Alleghany County Soil and Water Conservation District, *Linda Hash, Janie Woodle and Board of Supervisors, Paul Edwards, Jim Dixon, Terry Hall, Bobby Evans and Chris Huysman*
N.C. Cooperative Extension, Alleghany, *Teresa Herman, Aaron Ray Tompkins, Kathy Miller, Michele Hamm, Amy Lucas, Bryan Cave*
North Carolina Forest Service, Alleghany County, *Brandon Keener, Russell Choate*
Alleghany Tax Department, *Rita Miller*
Alleghany Mapping Department, *Wendy Williams*
Alleghany County Planning Department, *Travis Dalton*
Alleghany County Manager, *Don Adams*
Alleghany Board of Commissioners, *Larry Cox, Tom Smith, John Goudreau, Karen Leys, Larry Davis*
Natural Resources Conservation Service, *David Tucker, Greg Wagoner*
Alleghany Voluntary Agriculture Advisory Board, *Paul Edwards, Jim Dixon, Bobby Evans, David Gambill, Milly Richardson, Lewis Upchurch, Teresa Herman, Charles Williams, and Bradford Gambill*
Alleghany Farmland Preservation Planning Committee, *Don Adams, Seth Andrews, Brant Banks, Brandon Keener, Russell Choate, Walter Clark, Travis Dalton, Jim Dixon, Bryan Edwards, Paul Edwards, Pat Gaskin, Sandra Edwards, Bobby Evans, Bradford Gambill, David Gambill, Terry Hall, Dewitt Hardee, Eric Hiegl, Julia Houck, Clark Hunter, Amy Lucas, DW Miles, Milly Richardson, Steve Roten, Alan Souther, Aaron Ray Tompkins, David Tucker, Greg Wagoner, Ashley Weaver*
Turkey Knob Community, *Greg Wagoner, Joe Jones*
Sparta VFW Post # 7034, *Thomas Owens, Commander*
Glade Creek Volunteer Fire Department, *David Higgins*
Alleghany County Senior Center, *Karon Edwards*
Farm Service Agency, *Julia Houck*
Alleghany News
Blue Ridge Conservancy, *Walter Clark, Eric Heigl, Katie Trozzo*

Introduction to the Farmland Preservation Plan

In 1986, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Farmland Preservation Enabling Act.¹ This important legislation provided counties with the authority to establish farmland preservation programs including voluntary agricultural districts (VADs) and agricultural advisory boards. The Act also created the North Carolina Farmland Preservation Fund, which allowed counties to develop purchase of agricultural conservation easements programs and created a matching mechanism for distribution of Farmland Preservation Trust Fund monies.²

In 2005 the General Assembly amended the program with an expanded focus that included a strong agricultural economic development component. Renamed the Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Enabling Act and the Agricultural Development and Farmland Trust Fund, the revised trust fund supports agricultural development projects such as business planning and incubator programs, as well as agricultural easements and other traditional farmland preservation programs.

To be eligible for Trust Fund monies, counties must have an adopted countywide farmland preservation plan in place.³

To be consistent with the state model the plan must contain seven key sections. These include:

1. A statement of the need for action;
2. A summary of the County's authority to adopt the plan;
3. An overview of the county's agricultural activity, past and present;
4. An outline of challenges for the local agricultural community;
5. A statement of opportunities for enhancing local agriculture, including programs in place and potential new programs for the future;
6. A set of action steps to ensure a more viable agricultural community for the future;
7. A schedule to implement the action steps and an identification of possible funding sources for the long-term support of the plan.⁴

A countywide farmland preservation plan may be prepared with the assistance of an agricultural advisory board. The Alleghany County Farmland Preservation Planning Committee will take the lead role contracting with a consultant to write the plan, working closely with the Soil and Water Conservation District Board and staff, involving Cooperative Extension, NC Forest Service, County Planning and Mapping and any other groups that can provide input. Farming community input and involvement is imperative in developing the plan. Finally, the Plan will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners for approval and implementation. Once endorsed by the County Commissioners, the Plan will be submitted to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for certification.

The goal of the Alleghany Farmland Preservation Plan (AFPP) is to help county government and citizens appreciate the importance of agriculture to the fabric of life in Alleghany County and to address the many challenges that are facing farmers and agriculture. Farmland and forest land are irreplaceable natural resources. The farmers and landowners who are stewards of this land are important to the county for their value to the local economy and the quality of life for citizens.

¹ NCGS §106-735 et seq.

² Funding was not provided until 1998, when the legislature appropriated \$250,000 for acquisition of agricultural conservation easements

³ NCGS §106-744 (c)(1).

⁴ NCGS §106-744(e)(1-5).

This Farmland Preservation Plan is intended to serve as a guide to provide landowners and residents an increased awareness of agriculture and farmland preservation opportunities and practical options for strategies that will protect agriculture and preserve it for future generations. Adoption of recommendations contained in this plan will secure the County's commitment to addressing the decline of farms in Alleghany County and to investigating options and alternatives for future farms and farmers.

The intent of this plan is neither to limit nor restrict landowners' rights and uses. Agriculture is important to the county and its economy and to the well-being of family farms. However, the ultimate decision of farmland preservation rests in the hands of the owners of farms and forests.



Executive Summary

Due to the economic impact of agriculture on the region and in Alleghany County, local leaders need to consider agriculture as they plan for the future. Agriculture and forestry, which employs nearly 23 percent of Alleghany County residents and account for 64.6% percent of the total county value-added income,⁵ continue to be a core part of the Alleghany County economy and culture. Some farmers are seeing a significant increase in their product's market value while others are experiencing decreases, production expenses have steadily increased for all, since the economic downturn in 2008 farmland values have declined which negatively affects the debt to asset ratio. However, agriculture enjoys widespread support in the community.

Alleghany County agriculture faces many challenges in the coming years. While there was an increase in the number of acres in production (72,627 to 76,656), and size of farms in acres (134 to 148) between 2002 and 2007, the number of farms has decreased from 544 to 519. The average age of famers rose by 2.5 years during this period from 55.2 to 57.7. More principle operators are supplementing their farm income with jobs off the farm and there are fewer farmers to continue the agricultural operations when today's farmers retire.⁶

Among the major factors affecting the future of agriculture in Alleghany County are:

- An aging farmer population
- Absentee landowners
- An increase in small and part-time farmers
- Lack of off farm employment
- Inadequate access/opportunities to agricultural education
- Insufficient local markets for agricultural and timber products
- High costs of inputs (land, fuel, seed, fertilizer, operating capital, equipment, labor)
- Inadequate transition training
- Declining influence in the NC Legislature and Congress as North Carolina becomes more urbanized

These factors and others increase the need for recognition of the importance of agriculture to Alleghany County's economy and a need to provide an environment in the county to support this industry and its growth.

This Farmland Preservation Plan provides an overview of the current state of agriculture and forestry in Alleghany County and offers recommendations and implementation strategies for ensuring the economic viability and profitability of farms in the future. The recommendations are:

- Adopt the Alleghany County Farmland Preservation Plan as a tool to guide county programs and policies related to agriculture.
- Advocate for Alleghany County and rural North Carolina in efforts related to agriculture and forestry at all legislative levels.
- Expand participation in the Voluntary Agricultural District Program.
- Adopt the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Program.
- Develop an instrument for land prioritization for preservation.
- Increase the number of acres that are under an active forest management plan.
- Develop a mentor program for beginning farmers.
- Educate young people about agriculture and farming as a career.
- Support a multi-county "buy local" campaign.
- Support continued funding for the US Highway 21 improvements.

⁵Walden, IMPLAN,(Mig,Inc.)

⁶ US Census of Agriculture, 2007

- Offer continuing education programs for farmers and agribusiness owners.
- Advocate for a percentage of back taxes collected in loss of Present Use Tax Valuation set aside for assistance with Farmland Preservation.
- Organize an Alleghany County Agriculture Advisory Board.

These recommendations are discussed in more depth later in the Plan. They are intended to influence Alleghany County's long-term policy in support of farms and forests and to provide short-term program strategies toward that goal. Implementation of these recommendations will require the full and on-going support of local decision makers, producers, agribusinesses, government agencies, schools, and the community at large.



Statement of Need for Action

Alleghany County is a beautiful rural mountain county in the northwestern part of North Carolina. It is one of the smallest counties, having an area of only 233 square miles. It is bordered on the north by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and by Surry on the east, Wilkes to the south, and Ashe, on the west, from which it was formed in 1859. The eastern and southern borders of Alleghany follow the Eastern Continental Divide. Alleghany County was once known as the “Lost Province” because of its isolation among the peaks of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Today it is easily accessible via US Highway 21 and NC Highway 18. Sparta, the county seat, is located in the geographic center of the county at the intersection of these two highways and serves as the financial, trade, and governmental center of the county.

The word “Alleghany” is said to be derived from the Indian name meaning “Fine Stream.” The name is suitable for this scenic, unspoiled county which is drained by the New River, the second oldest river in the world. Legend has it that the New River was discovered by Peter Jefferson, the father of Thomas Jefferson. Leading a party of surveyors, he was surprised to come upon a “new” river behind the mountains. Tools and artifacts have been found in the New River Valley identifying the culture of the Paleo Indians around 10,000 to 8,000 BC, later followed by the Cherokee and Shawnee tribes.

In the late 1700’s, the county was settled by hard-working pioneers, mostly of English, German, Scottish, and Irish decent, many of whom migrated down the “Wagon Road” from Pennsylvania. Many of their descendants still live on the land that was granted to their families 200 years ago.⁷

Alleghany’s climate is pleasant with four distinct seasons with the growing season generally April 1 through October 1, average January temperature is 29 degrees and the average annual rainfall is 46 inches.

The elevation ranges from 1,760 feet in Stone Mountain State Park to 4,175 on Catherine’s Knob in the Peach Bottom Mountain Range. The majority of the county elevation ranges between 2,500 and 3,000 feet above sea level.⁸ Alleghany is known for its clean, natural beauty, relaxed atmosphere, excellent quality of life and friendly people.

The total workforce of Alleghany in 2008 was 4,735, with 22.6% or 1070 employed in agriculture and agricultural related businesses.⁹

Agriculture makes a major contribution to the well-being of Alleghany County residents. Agriculture directly impacts the local economy through farm gate products receipts, service and production input expenditures, farm employment, and farm support businesses. Farmers also make significant contributions as stewards of the undeveloped land that they manage in the county. As a result of the farm community’s commitment to stewardship, the county’s soil and water resources are protected, groundwater is recharged, stormwater runoff is abated, wildlife habitat is preserved, and scenic and historic vistas that define the county’s character are safeguarded. Economically and environmentally, it is in the county’s interest to promote the local agricultural industry and support farmland preservation. Policies and programs that encourage and support farmers to continue to farm is a cost effective way of maintaining the quality of life for all Alleghany County residents.

As demonstrated by data supplied in this document, Alleghany County is losing farming operations. Being geographically located as one of the closest mountain counties to the urban areas of Charlotte, Winston Salem and all points east has increased the development potential for this rural county. Once

⁷ Alleghany Chamber of Commerce, <http://www.sparta-nc/alleghanynorthcarolina.aspx>

⁸ US Geological Survey Map, Reston, Virginia

⁹ Walden, IMPLAN, MIG, Inc.

known as the Lost Province, it has and is expected to continue to be found by those urbanites seeking a mountain refuge. With thoughtful action, Alleghany County can help mitigate the unique set of stresses that agriculture faces.

The purpose of the Alleghany Farmland Preservation Plan is to highlight the challenges faced by the agriculture and forestry industries in the county. This document strategically devises an action plan to assist local governments in recognizing and supporting programs and policies that can continue to support the preservation and growth of these industries. To fully recognize the challenges and opportunities that farms and forests face, it is imperative to determine aspects of Alleghany County that influence these industries. The county's history, geography, soils, demographics, development trends, and regulations governing farming constitute the view of agriculture in the county. Equally important is an understanding of the issues and concerns of Alleghany County farmers.

North Carolina's agricultural industry, including food, fiber and forestry, contributes \$70 billion annually to the state's economy, and accounts for 18% of the state's income, and employs over 17% of the work force¹⁰, but the industry faces changing technologies, global markets, diversifying consumer demands and environmental regulations.

The N.C. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund was legislated to encourage the stability of the state's agricultural economy by preserving working lands. With the support of the ADFP Trust, the Alleghany Farmland Preservation Plan (AFPP) formulated for Alleghany County will guide county and local government leaders to consider policies and practices that will maintain farm family income, retain agricultural-related jobs, and increase public awareness.

Economic trends in the last three decades have favored a knowledge-based economy, free-trade agreements, and an exploding growth of the service sector resulting in continued growth and expansion of urbanization. The number of tobacco farms, statewide, has decreased by approximately 70 percent since 2002, and the cotton farms decreased nearly 40 percent¹¹. Alleghany County, since 1997, has experienced a 20 percent decrease in the number of farms and has seen a commodity shift with tobacco acreage decreasing and pumpkin acreage increasing.¹² Greenery production has increased while the cut Christmas tree market has suffered as a result of the economic downturn.¹³

A quick snapshot of Alleghany County's state of agriculture from the 2007 Census of Agriculture County Profile (Appendix B) supports the importance of agriculture:

Land in farms: 76,656 acres (increase from 72,627 in 2002)

Number of farms: 519 (down from 544 in 2002 and 652 in 1997)

Number of operators with farming as primary occupation: 245 (decrease of 25 producers since 2002)

Total value-added income for agriculture and agribusiness (2008): \$81,334,101

Ranked 1st in North Carolina in pumpkin production

Ranked 15th Nationally in pumpkin production

Ranked 2nd in North Carolina in cut Christmas trees

Ranked 5th Nationally in cut Christmas trees

Ranked 3rd in North Carolina in cut Christmas Trees and short rotation woody crops

Ranked 8th Nationally in cut Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops

Ranked 3rd in North Carolina in milk and other dairy products from cows

Ranked 6th in North Carolina in corn for silage

Ranked 9th in North Carolina in cattle and calves

¹⁰ NCDA Agriculture Overview, June, 2011. www.ncagr.gov/stats/general/overview.htm

¹¹ N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, press release, February 2009

¹² USDA Census of Agriculture, 2002, 2007

¹³ Interview, NC Cooperative Extension, Alleghany Center

Average age of principle operator: 57.7 years of age with 480 being male and 39 female

Agriculture benefits the county in many ways. In studies conducted in various counties across the state by N.C. State University, the cost of community services were less for agricultural lands than those provided to residential development. Despite being taxed on the basis of current land uses, property in agricultural land uses is found to be a net contributor to the local budget, generating \$1.69 in revenues for every dollar of public services that it receives.¹⁴



¹⁴ Renkow, Mitch. Cost of Community Services. Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, NC State University, 2006. Page2.<http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/wq/lpn/PDFDocuments/alamanceCOCS.pdf>

Challenges and Opportunities: Survey and Interview Results

Meetings, surveys and interviews were conducted with Alleghany County farmers to identify challenges and issues facing agriculture. A summary of survey and interview results serve to identify specific challenges and to reveal opportunities that these challenges afford for the future of agriculture in Alleghany County. Example letters, promotions, agendas, surveys and interviews can be viewed in Appendix C.

A short survey questionnaire was mailed in January 2013 to all landowners in the county with their land registered for Present Use Value taxation (PUV). PUV designation lowers the tax value of lands in agricultural production and is perhaps the most important policy tool used by owners of farm and forestry lands in North Carolina. The vast majority of land under agricultural or forestry production is registered under PUV, although small micro-farms not meeting minimum land production thresholds, as well as some larger tracts, are not.

Mail-Out Survey

The survey instrument was dispersed through mail and on-line by the Alleghany County Soil and Water District and was distributed at the four county Farmland Preservation Planning meetings as well. Eighty-seven complete or partially complete surveys were returned to the Alleghany County Soil and Water Conservation District.

PUV landowners were asked fifteen questions regarding their farmland. Responses are discussed as follows:

Question 1: Please tell us, by township and /or community, where your farm(s) is/are principally located in Alleghany County.

Twenty different communities were represented from the respondents. Communities represented were Amelia, Glade Valley, Ennice, Gap Civil, Cherry Lane, Whitehead, Piney Creek, Sparta, Prathers Creek, Cranberry, New Hope, Vox, Laurel Springs, Glade Creek, Elk Creek, Furches, Twin Oaks, Turkey Knob, Pine Swamp, and Stratford. This represents almost every identified community within Alleghany County. Some respondents reported more than one community.

Question 2: How long has your family been farming?

Seventy-nine respondents answered this question, with the vast majority (51 respondents, or 65%) reporting their land having been in their family for more than 50 years. This result indicates that a large portion of farmland has a relatively stable ownership and turnover rates for these lands are not very high.

<u>Years in Farming</u>	<u>Responses</u>
<20	9
20-50	19
50-100	26
100-150	16
150-200	3
>200	6

Question 3: How many acres do you farm within Alleghany County?

Eighty-one respondents reported a total of 12,961 acres being farmed within Alleghany County with acreage ranging between 4 and 600 acres. The average farm size of the responses was 162.78 acres.

Question 4: Of these acres how many do you own?

The seventy-nine respondents owned 8,260 acres with an average of 101.7 acres owned. The seventy-nine respondents reported leasing 2,397 acres from another landowner.

Question 5: How many acres do you timber?

Fifty respondents reported 2,676 acres in timber.

Question 6: How many acres, if any, do you farm outside Alleghany County?

Fourteen respondents farm 2,381 acres outside the county

Question 7: Ages of those involved in the farming operation

There were ninety-three males with an average age of 58.9 and sixty-four females with an average age of 60.6 reported to be involved in the farming operation. The obvious conclusion from the advanced age of respondents is that a significant percentage of Alleghany County land will transition to a new generation of landowners in the next two decades.

Question 8: Which of the following applies to your farming operation in the next 10 years?

Eighty-seven respondents reported the following:

Plan to expand <u>12 or 13.8%</u>	Plan to sell farm to another farmer <u>2 or 2.3%</u>
No Change <u>43 or 49.4%</u>	Plan to transfer to a relative <u>17 or 19.6%</u>
Plan to scale back <u>10 or 11.5%</u>	Plan to sell farm for nonfarm purposes <u>3 or 3.4%</u>

Other comments were: To change crops; sell out completely; future development opportunities

Question 9: Do your children plan to continue farming as an occupation?

Of the sixty-six respondents to this question, 33 responded yes and 33 responded no.

Question 10: If no, what plans do you have for the farm when you are no longer able to manage it?

There were only seven respondents to this question. Five plan to lease the farm, one plans to scale back and one plans to sell the farm. Obviously, with the low response to this question there are uncertainties about the future of many of the farming operations.

Question 11: How long do you personally intend to be farming?

Seventy-two responded to this question. Given the average age of those involved with the farming operation previously reported in Question 7 (males 58.9 and females 60.6), it is quite optimistic that nearly 50% of those currently farming plan to farm for 10 or more years.

1-5 years	<u>13 or 18.1%</u>
5-10 years	<u>23 or 31.9%</u>
10-20 years	<u>16 or 22.2%</u>
20+ years	<u>20 or 27.1%</u>

Question 12: Are you a full time or part-time farmer?

Seventy-six responded to this question.

Full	<u>33 or 43.4%</u>
Part-time	<u>43 or 56.6%</u>

Question 13: Do you have off farm employment?

Yes	<u>36 or 43.9%</u>
No	<u>46 or 56.1%</u>

Question 14: What percentage of your total household income comes from your farming operation?

Seventy-six respondents reported.

0-25%	<u>53 or 69.7%</u>
25-50%	<u>6 or 7.9%</u>
50-75%	<u>6 or 7.9%</u>
75-100%	<u>11 or 14.5%</u>

Questions 12, 13 and 14 pose for interesting interpretation. 43% are full time farmers, while 43% have off farm employment, yet only 11 % depend on the farm for 75% or more of the total household income. One can only guess that other family members working off farm are contributing 89% to the household income.

Question 15: Is any land you farm under the Voluntary Ag District program?

Seventy-six respondents reported.

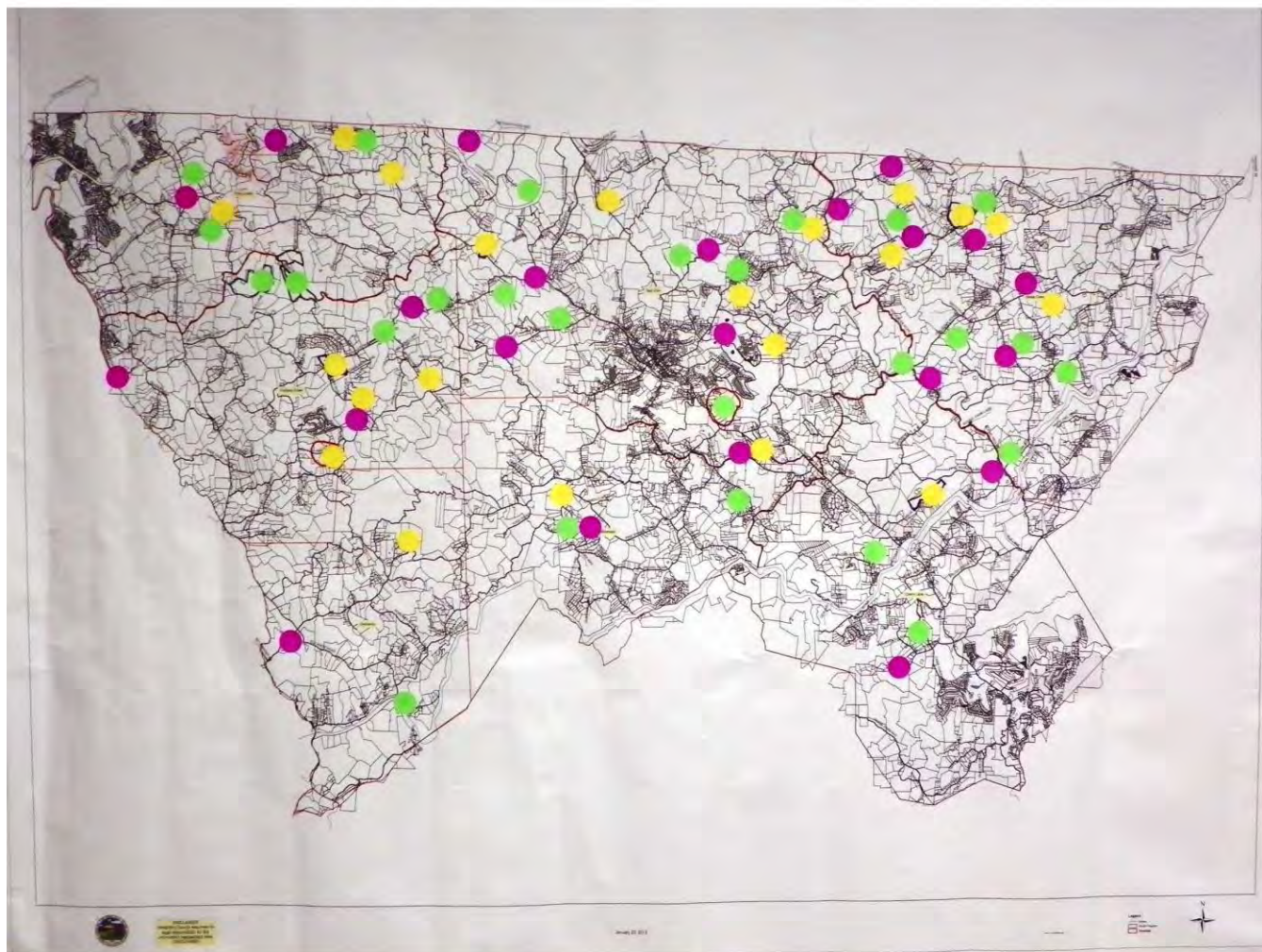
Yes 15 or 19.7%

No 61 or 80.3%



Meetings

The meetings were held in different communities within Alleghany County. Three meetings were breakfast meetings and were held in the Turkey Knob, Sparta and Glade Creek communities. One follow-up dinner meeting was held at the Senior Center in Sparta. A total of 84 participated in the meetings. In order to derive at the demographic representation, each participant was asked to identify their farm location on a county map and complete a farm inventory survey. The following map identifies the location of participants thus demonstrating that the entire county was represented in the group meetings.



MAP DENOTING MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Meeting participants were asked to complete a Farm Inventory as a means to make sure representation of the entire farming community was met. They were asked to enter the number of acres or the number of head for each agricultural commodity. Following are the totals for each agricultural commodity as completed by the respondents.

<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Christmas Trees	3,315
Timberland	791
Pumpkins	1,002
Corn for Silage	1,322
Hay	2,162
Nursery/Greenhouse	2
Vegetables	350
Tobacco (Burley)	80
Herbs/Perennials/Flowers	0
Other Crops	210

<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Number</u>
Dairy Cows	918
Dairy Heifers	515
Dairy Calves	331
Beef Cows	2,056
Beef Calves	1,584
Beef Yearlings	1,653
Poultry	0
Hogs/Pigs	2
Horses	3
Dairy/Meat Goats	31
Sheep/lambs	0
Other Animals	3

While fifty-two farms responded correctly, there were several who only placed check marks in the commodity apparently denoting they had that particular commodity but chose not to include the acreage or the number. There were fifty-nine checks made in the survey in this fashion. Commodities receiving checks were Christmas trees, timberland, corn for silage, hay, nursery/greenhouse, vegetables, tobacco, herbs/perennials/flowers, beef cows, beef calves, beef yearlings, poultry, horses, and dairy/meat goats.

Other commodities that respondents wrote in that were not listed on the Inventory Sheet were: Corn for grain-350 acres, pine tips, Christmas garland/wreaths/table toppers, sugar cane, honey/bees for pollination, hunting leases, and greenhouse tobacco plants.

Based on the map denoting location of respondents and all major and minor commodities being represented well, we can be assured that the challenges and opportunities identified at the meetings were representative of the agricultural community.

A SWOT analysis was conducted at each breakfast meeting. It is a very simple technique that focuses on Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). SWOT is used by strategic planners and marketers to assess the competitive environment of a region, industry, business or product. Factors being assessed were those that directly or indirectly impact the viability/profitability of agriculture in Alleghany County. The SWOT results are presented below.

Farmland Preservation Plan SWOT
(Top 10 in each category)

STRENGTHS

Clean air, scenic views, climate, and air quality
Clean, abundant water and rainfall
Strong farm support from Cooperative Extension, Soil & Water District, Forest Service, etc.
Fertile, well drained soils suitable for a variety of crops
Strong Community (farmers helping farmers, community support for agriculture)
Generational ties to farm community
Good Cattlemen's and Christmas Tree Associations
Local government support
Cooperation among farmers
Good veterinarian services available

WEAKNESSES

Aging farmers
Lack of interest and opportunities for young farmers
Cost of farm start-up (land, equipment, feed, etc.)
Roads (costs of delivery to and from markets, distance from interstate)
Lack of off farm employment
Lack of estate planning to transfer farm to next generation
Shorter growing season
Lack of farm supply and equipment dealers
Lack of knowledge of best management practices
Leased land (availability, written lease agreements)

OPPORTUNITIES

Cost share funding availabilities (Soil & Water, Farm Service Agency, Forest Service, grants)
More research & education for viable alternative agricultural practices and products
Agri-tourism
Value adding (beef to consumer, timber to furniture, canning of vegetables for sale)
Expand Farmers Market
Move idle land into productive land (inventory of availability, written leasing agreements)
More interstate/inter-county collaborations
Coordinated marketing among farmers for products produced
Conservation easements (development rights donated, purchased, or time limited)
Young farmer association/mentoring/education programs including Ag in high school

THREATS

Economic uncertainty
County tax revaluation
Lack of interest in farming
Rising input costs (land, fuel, seed, fertilizer, equipment, labor)
Invasive pests (weeds, insects, coyote, deer)
Development pressures (non-farmers lacking understanding of farming)
Lack of education about farming in schools
Government regulations
Lack of available labor
Irresponsible farming (hurting the image for all farmers)



Interviews

In addition to the distribution of surveys and meetings, personal interviews were conducted. These interviews were directed to members of the agricultural community. Efforts were made to interview a representative sample of persons involved in agriculture in Allegheny County. Eighteen different farmers were interviewed. The interviews served as support for most of the components concluded from the SWOT Analysis.

Interviewees were asked to identify challenges they face in farming under six headings: Politics, Laws/Regulations, Environment, Economics, Cultural and Markets. Following is a general summary of the responses from the 18 interviewees.

Politics

Challenges identified were concerns over farm program abuse; the farm bill; need for continuation of cost share programs; rewarding bad management; address consistency of program management; continuation of milk support program; lack of collaboration in state and national politics is hurting everyone; reducing reliance on imports.

Laws/Regulations

Concerns over more and more regulations; nutrient management working well by reducing runoff and protecting streams; irresponsible farmers are hurting the rest; available land to rent to put dairy waste on; do not de-regulate pesticide use for environmental reasons; few problems with neighbor complaints.

Environmental

Greatest challenges identified were: washing out of stream banks; soil erosion; maintaining fences; bug and weed problems due to mild winters; threats and damage from deer, coyotes, raccoons, invasive weeds, stink bugs; extremes in weather patterns; lack of honey bees for pollination.

Economics

The challenge of availability of financing; better management practices; cost of production continues to increase but prices received do not; development pressure; doing everything right and competing with those who do not; available labor for hire; higher costs due to distance to markets, no farm supply

or equipment dealers, roads and high cost of leasing of land.

Cultural

Cultural challenges were: Lack of appreciation for the value of farming, especially from those moving into the county; seems farmers must get big to succeed; lack of land to lease for crop rotation and meeting nutrient management requirements; farmers are getting older with lack of interest from younger generation; where and who will be farming in Alleghany in 10 years.

Markets

Challenges identified relating to markets were: Roads, getting product out and supplies in; need for more markets; collaborative marketing of what we have to sell; beef markets are good; buying and selling local.

In addition to the six categories of challenges, interviewees were asked four questions. The questions followed by a summary of the answers are provided here:

How can local markets be improved?

Answers included better advertisement; making communities aware of what is available; support local Farmers Market; promote “buy local” to schools, hospital, etc.; develop and maintain a local farmer/product clearinghouse list; distinguish between vaccinated calves and non-vaccinated.

What ideas do you have for attracting young people to farming?

Interviewees responded with: cannot make it if you are not already in farming or inherit it; buy what you need, not what you want; do not try to keep up with the Joneses; increased community support and mentors; get rid of the video games and get outside; get farming experience by working on a farm; look somewhere other than Alleghany; develop incentive, cost share programs; someone is going to have to farm and feed everyone; don’t know how we can do this; Farmers Market for kids; involve entire community like Monterey, VA (Maple Syrup).

What advice would you give to a young farmer?

Advice given to young farmers were: learn all you can and stay educated; do not get discouraged, stay with it through ups and downs; keep excellent records; start as part-time and have off farm income; have farming background; become involved in something like Young Farmer Program; find a mentor; takes a lot of hard work and dedication 24/7 but is very rewarding lifestyle; must be more efficient in the future; do what you love; if part of a current farm have a transition plan.

What ideas do you have for alternative agricultural commodities?

Alternative agricultural ideas were: corn for grain; locally grown freezer beef; selling breeding stock; work toward organic production; strawberries; selling to schools, hospital and nursing home; hunting leases; pastured poultry, beef and pork.



Farmland Preservation Toolbox

The section below introduces various farmland preservation tools available to landowners. They vary in length of commitment and eligibility requirements, and many of these programs can be combined and overlapped on an individual property. What is certain is that there's something for everyone here, and participation in these programs leads to a stronger network of partners and education across the agricultural community.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD)

Established by N.C.G.S. §§ 106-735 through 106- 744 and Chapter 153A North Carolina General Statutes and administered at the county level. Voluntary Agricultural Districts are designated areas where commercial agriculture will be encouraged and protected. The purpose of this is to promote agricultural values and the general welfare of the county and, more specifically, to increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life, and to encourage the economic and financial health of agriculture and forestry. The ordinance provides protection from non-farm development and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.

Alleghany County adopted its VAD ordinance on August 18, 2003. Its stated purpose is to encourage the preservation and protection of family farms, to increase the visibility of agricultural, forestry and horticultural operations and to protect and to promote these land uses. (Appendix D)
The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners appointed an Advisory Board to implement the VAD Program, which currently has more than 10,800 acres enrolled in Alleghany County.

Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts

Established by N.C.G.S §§ 106-743.1 to .5, an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District is a VAD formed of one or more farms that are subject to an IRREVOCABLE 10-year agreement to limit development. In return for the condition of irrevocability the landowner receives the added benefits of being able to receive 25 percent of gross revenue from the sale of nonfarm products and still qualify as a bona fide farm, and being eligible to receive up to 90 percent cost-share assistance from the Agricultural Cost Share Program if requested by the Soil and Water District Board. Currently Alleghany County does not have the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District program.

Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a written agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or public agency under which the landowner agrees to keep the land available for agriculture and to restrict subdivision, non-farm development and other uses that are incompatible with commercial agriculture.

Basic Requirements:

Permanently foregoing the right to subdivide or develop the land being conserved. There will be other limitations on activities to preserve the land's productivity, environmental values and rural character. Cash payments are needed to cover the costs of land, legal services, surveys, appraisals, and long-term stewardship services provided by the conservation partner and other miscellaneous activities. In some cases grant funds will cover these costs.

Other Information:

- A portion of the property can be left out of the easement, thereby providing an area for future homes and other non-farm activities.
- Agricultural activities including forestry are allowed under the agreement.

- Despite the term “easement” access to the public is not provided by the agreement.
- The value of a conservation easement is determined by a licensed land appraiser and is typically between 25 percent and 75 percent of the land’s market value.
- A periodic inspection of the property is required to ensure that development does not occur. This provision will be included in the agreement.
- The agreement is recorded on the county’s land records and runs with the title. All future landowners must comply with the terms and conditions of the agreement.

Financial Benefits:

If the conservation easement is donated then the landowner will likely qualify for a federal income tax deduction and a state income tax credit. The value of these benefits depends on the appraised value of the easement and the income tax situation of the landowner.

A conservation easement can also be sold by the landowner through a transaction commonly referred to as a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE). Funds to purchase a conservation easement can be raised from private and government sources. North Carolina and the federal government have programs to purchase agricultural conservation easements. Funding through these programs is very competitive and will generally amount to a percentage of the easement’s value. The tax benefits described above can be claimed for any of the easement’s value above the purchase price.

Term Conservation Easements:

Also called Agricultural Agreements, these agreements are similar to conservation easements, but apply for a finite period of time agreed to by the landowner and conservation partner.

N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

N.C.G.S. § 106-744(c) established a trust fund to be administered by the commissioner of agriculture. The purpose of the trust fund is to provide monies to purchase agricultural conservation easements and to fund programs that promote the development and sustainability of farming, and the transition of existing farms to new farm families. Counties and nonprofit conservation organizations can apply for grants for these purposes. Since 2008 the General Assembly has appropriated nearly \$20 million to the trust fund for 175 projects across the state.

Blue Ridge Conservancy (BRC)

Mission of the BRC is: To permanently protect land and water resources with agricultural, ecological, cultural, recreational and scenic value in Northwest North Carolina. Blue Ridge Conservancy partners with private farmland owners to voluntarily protect working and productive farms. Conservation easements allow farmers to continue working their land while ensuring it remains farmland forever. These farms remain in private ownership, can be sold, passed to heirs and remain on county tax rolls. BRC has protected 3,394 acres in Alleghany County.¹⁵

State Right-to-Farm Law

By statute, North Carolina farmers are granted the right to farm without legal interference from non-farm neighbors and local governing bodies, subject to certain limitations. Pre-litigation mediation of farm nuisance claims is mandatory. This law applies only to nuisance actions. It does not apply to other types of legal action.

¹⁵ Blue Ridge Conservancy, <http://blueridgeconservancy.org/>

Present Use Value Property Tax

Working farms, forests and horticultural lands by state statute are afforded a property tax assessment based on their agricultural working value, as opposed to the value of their land for industrial or residential development. Agricultural land must be actively engaged in the commercial production or growing of crops, plants or animals and under a sound management program. At least one 10-acre tract must be under cultivation and have produced an average gross income of at least \$1,000 in the last three years. Forest land must be actively engaged in growing trees under a sound management program and consist of at least one 20-acre tract. There are no income requirements for forest land. Horticultural land must be actively engaged in production or growing of fruits and vegetables, nursery products or floral production. At least one 5-acre tract of land must be in actual production and produced an average gross income of \$1,000 for the past three years. This tax deferred program affords landowners some amount of cost control that would otherwise limit their ability to farm profitably. Present Use Value information can be obtained from the Alleghany County Tax Office.



Farm Transition Planning

Making careful plans for the transfer of ownership of farm property and assets from the current owner to the next can be enough to preserve a farm for decades. Many options are available when planning an estate or land transfer. Farm owners can increase the likelihood of a successful transition that maintains the viability of the farm by obtaining professional assistance early in the process. The need exists to provide educational and technical resources to professionals and landowners as they continue to age and indicate a lack of transition and estate planning efforts.

Sales Tax

Commercial farms can receive an exemption from sales tax on certain items used in their farming operations. Farm machinery, containers, tobacco-drying equipment, grain-storage facilities, fuel, potting soil, feed, seed and fertilizer are completely exempt from state and local sales taxes. To utilize the exemption, farmers must obtain an exemption number from the NC Department of Revenue: http://www.dornc.com/downloads/E595A_3-02.pdf. Forms are also available at the Soil and Water District and Cooperative Extension offices.

Income Tax

Farmers report agricultural income on IRS Schedule F. An experienced agricultural tax provider can provide enormous savings by understanding deductions, depreciation, and other tools to keep taxes in check.



Recommendations, Implementation and Timeline

After gathering and analyzing input from statistical records, producer and other farm system interviews, and community meetings, the following recommendations are made to agricultural and political leaders for development of agricultural opportunity in Alleghany County.

The recommendations that follow are just that—recommendations. These do not infringe on any landowner's right to do what he or she wishes to do with the land. The recommendations provide a framework for county agencies that work with agriculture to assist producers and landowners.

In order for the recommendations to be effective and relevant, they must be reviewed periodically, at least annually, to ensure the latest information is presented to the populations targeted.

While not exhaustive, this list addresses many of the areas of concern and opportunities that were noted during the meetings, surveys and interviews.

1. Endorse Alleghany County Farmland Preservation Plan as a tool to guide county programs and policies related to agriculture.

For this plan to be effective, it must be endorsed by the Alleghany County Board of Commissioners. Once the plan is endorsed, it is sent to the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for certification. When the plan has been reviewed by NCDA&CS legal counsel and it meets all statutory requirements, the plan will be certified. This certification will allow Alleghany County to be placed in priority status for funding for farmland preservation projects from the NCDA&CS ADFP Trust Fund. The county's Tier 1 status will also enhance its status for funds.

Implementation Responsibility: N.C. Cooperative Extension Alleghany County Center, Alleghany County Soil and Water Conservation District, Alleghany County Planning, Alleghany County Manager office, Alleghany Farmland Preservation Board and other interested parties.

Timeline: This plan should be presented to the Board of Commissioners during the Fourth Quarter 2013. Once endorsed, the plan will be submitted to NCDA&CS for certification. Once certification has been awarded, the county should seek opportunities for funding of farmland preservation projects.

2. Advocate for Alleghany County and rural North Carolina in efforts related to agriculture and forestry at all legislative levels.

As North Carolina becomes increasingly more urban with population concentrated in the piedmont region of the state, Alleghany County and other low-growth or no-growth counties will see their influence in the state legislature and Congress further diluted. Without sufficient representation, the needs of rural communities will not be well known, understood or addressed in Raleigh or Washington. Power and decision making will be concentrated in the more populous regions of the state. Alleghany County leaders should work with other rural N.C. counties to ensure that their voice is heard. The development of a core group to advocate locally and regionally for agricultural policy will give support to this effort and allow for these issues to be addressed in a timely manner. It is important that County Government include agriculture as part of future economic planning for Alleghany County.

Implementation Responsibility: Alleghany County Farmland Preservation Board, Alleghany County Board of Commissioners, Alleghany Soil and Water District Board, Alleghany County Planning Department, Alleghany County Farm Bureau, N.C. Cooperative Extension Alleghany County Center and the voting public.

Timeline: This should begin immediately and be a continuous process with a core group (possibly the Alleghany Agriculture Advisory Committee) identified by September of 2014.

3. Expand participation in the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) program and explore an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Program.

Only 12.2 percent of the qualifying land in Allegheny County is enrolled in the Voluntary Agricultural District program. Landowners need to be informed about the benefits of enrolling in the program including protection from nuisance suits, required public hearings for proposed condemnation and having an official voice in local government through the advisory board.

Allegheny County currently does not have an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District ordinance, which includes all the benefits of the VAD program plus conservation agreements between the landowner and the county that limits development for 10 years and provides potential eligibility for a higher percentage of cost-share funds. The county should adopt this ordinance and inform landowners of their eligibility and the program's benefits.



Bobby Gambill –Allegheny's first VAD participant

Implementation Responsibility: Allegheny County Agricultural Advisory Board, Allegheny VAD Advisory Committee, County Government Departments and Commissioners, N.C. Cooperative Extension Allegheny Center, N.C. Forest Service, Allegheny County, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Allegheny County Farm Bureau, Allegheny County Soil and Water Conservation District, and other agencies as needed.

Timeline: Upon adoption of the Farmland Preservation Plan, county teams should begin reviewing tax records to identify landowners who might qualify for the VAD program. In the beginning of 2014, county teams should plan workshops to educate landowners about VAD. Workshops should be held in 2014.

County commissioners should adopt the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Program by December 2014. County teams should begin planning educational workshops in the winter of 2014 for implementation in 2014 and 2015.

4. Develop a Prioritization Plan for Preservation.

While funds to purchase agriculture conservation easements is very limited, it is recommended to adopt objective criteria for ranking farmland in order of priority for preservation, if and when funds are available. While preservation of prime farmland is an obvious priority, other factors must be considered when ranking farmland for priority in protection needs. The Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund (ADFPTF) website hosts a risk assessment model to assist in prioritizing lands for preservation. Farmland is scored according to two broad criteria: Viability and Threat level. Viability of lands are prioritized using a complex scoring system that includes proximity to other types of agricultural assets such as feed mills, farmers markets, tractor supply stores, livestock markets, slaughter houses, etc., and whether such land is enrolled in a VAD or in close proximity to other protected lands. The threat level assessment is determined by proximity to sewer and water lines and defined urban areas. County leaders should refer to this model to prioritize lands as it is

further developed.¹⁶

While the ADFPTF model is incomplete, it can provide some guidance in developing priorities for preservation. Several counties in North Carolina have developed similar comprehensive farmland ranking systems that are used to identify and prioritize lands for purchase of agricultural conservation easements. These models include a soil assessment and a site assessment, and scores for each are added to arrive at the total score. It is recommended that the Alleghany Agricultural Advisory Board lead the development of a model for Alleghany Priority Preservation. Stanly County, North Carolina Farm Preservation Plan included Draft Eligibility Criteria and Ranking Formula for preservation that could serve as a guide for Alleghany. The Stanly Eligibility Criteria and Ranking Formula can be viewed in Appendix E.

When considering soils as major criteria for ranking, prime soils, soils of statewide importance, and soils of local importance should be weighted. (Appendix F) It is recommended that prime soils are weighted at 5 points and soils of statewide and local importance are weighted at 3 points and all other soils are rated at 1 point.

The assigned points are then multiplied by the percentage of farmland containing such soils on a given farm. This gives a basis for utilizing soils as a consideration for prioritization land for preservation. This process along with some of the Stanly County Criteria for Preservation will serve as starting point in developing the priorities for ranking farms for preservation In Alleghany County.

Implementation Responsibility: Alleghany Agriculture Advisory Board, Soil and Water Conservation District and Board, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Cooperative Extension, Alleghany Center, Alleghany Planning and Mapping Departments

Timeline: This is only a start at prioritizing land for preservation and serves as consideration only. It is recommended that a study group be developed in April 2014 to pursue the development of the criteria to be used in prioritizing farmland for preservation.

5. Increase the number of acres that are under an active forest management plan.

Currently 24,303 acres of forestland are under an active Forest Management Plan. It is important to educate landowners about the benefits of having a management plan including tax breaks, qualification for cost-share and technical assistance, increased forest productivity and profitability, enhance wildlife habitat, aesthetic beauty, clean water and improved recreational opportunities. There is opportunity for many landowners who own forestland to develop a Management Plan. This can be accomplished by creating an enhanced forest management education program to address forest management, taxation and income options. Encourage the rejuvenation and membership in the Alleghany County Forestry Association. Promote the Association to all forest owners through a marketing plan using all available media (newspaper, websites, mailings to owners and announcement at all events). Expand small timber management seminars offered through Extension to reach forest landowners as well as absentee landowners. Make forest owners aware of current resources from agencies involved with forestry such as N.C. Cooperative Extension, Alleghany County; NCSU Extension Forestry and North Carolina Forest Service, Alleghany County.

Implementation Responsibility: North Carolina Forest Service, Alleghany County, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Alleghany Center, Alleghany County Tax Administration, NC State Extension Forestry, Local Forestry Consultants, landowners

¹⁶ The model, including GIS maps and a description of rankings, can be found at:
<http://www.ncadfp.org/FarmlandPreservation.htm>

Timeline: Begin the planning process during the early winter of 2013 with identification of landowners, promotion and implementation in the spring of 2014.

6. Develop a mentor program for beginning farmers; educate young people about agriculture and farming as a career; and organize a Young Farmer Association.

An aging farmer population and a trend toward absentee landowners in Alleghany County present a serious problem for the future of agriculture.

A mentor program for beginning farmers and high school and college students would give experienced farmers an opportunity to share their expertise with someone who may or may not be related to them. This would help young farmers who are just getting started in the business and improve their potential for success. It would give students the opportunity to receive hands-on learning experience on farming and agribusiness operations and guide them in making career choices. It may also provide an opportunity for retiring farmers to continue their legacy after retirement.

Coinciding with the mentoring program it is encourage to organize a Young Farmer Association (possibly Farm Bureau's Young Farmer and Rancher Program) where young farmers and farm families regardless of the commodity come together periodically to participate in educational programs, tours, and other opportunities that has the potential to encourage success.

During the community meetings and respondents on the surveys, youth education was identified as an important component of farmland preservation and the future of agriculture in Alleghany County. It is recommended to provide youth and young adults the opportunity to actively participate in agriculture organizations such as FFA, 4-H, Soil and Water Conservation competitions, Envirothon, Jr. Master Gardeners, Farm Bureau's Ag in the Classroom, and other agriculture opportunities. Also, encourage youth and young adults to participate in agriculture opportunities that emphasize issues, careers, economic challenges and opportunities facing agriculture. Youth would develop an understanding of the agriculture industry and make life choices based on knowledge and experience.

Implementation Responsibility: Alleghany County Agricultural Advisory Board, N.C. Cooperative Extension Alleghany County Center/4H, Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District, Alleghany County Farm Bureau, Alleghany County School System, area colleges and community colleges, and other agencies as needed.

Timeline: Begin developing program guidelines and objectives by February 2014. Begin implementation by October 2014 and continue.

7. Support a "Buy Local" promotion campaign.

The local foods movement has been growing in North Carolina for several years. There are producers who currently serve area restaurants and participate in farmers markets in other counties. Great effort has gone into the development and maintenance of the Alleghany Farmer's Market located in Sparta. This is an excellent opportunity for small and part-time farmers to market their goods. However, there are other opportunities that may have relevance for local producers.

A "Buy Local" campaign would include a branding effort to support local producers. Implementing the campaign will require skills to develop relationships with market managers, school and institutional food services, grocery stores and chefs at restaurants to encourage each to purchase local produce. Offering GAP certification to farmers is crucial for those who wish to work with larger entities that feature local foods and products. Pursuing opportunities in value added products, local processing, transportation and regional marketing effort has great potential.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), a non-profit organization located in Asheville, is working to create and expand local food markets that will preserve agricultural heritage, provide fresh and healthy food, and keep farmers farming. ASAP is working to link family farms to institutional food buyers such as schools and hospitals, has helped to establish tailgate markets, provides marketing assistance through workshops, and publishes a local food guide every year.¹⁷ More information about ASAP's programs can be found on its website, www.asapconnections.org.

Implementation Responsibilities: Agricultural Advisory Board, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, N.C. Cooperative Extension Alleghany County Center, Food Service Department- Alleghany School System, N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Alleghany Agricultural Coalition, Alleghany Farmer's Market, Ashe Commercial Kitchen, New River Growers, Pilot Pride, Blue Ridge Seeds of Change, Chamber of Commerce and other appropriate parties.

Timeline: Agencies will conduct a series of workshops/trainings in spring of 2014 to extend through the year for producers interested in the following areas and other topics deemed appropriate:

- Expanding into local food venues
- GAP certification
- Marketing at farmer's markets
- Marketing to restaurants
- Marketing to schools
- Value added
- Community supported agriculture
- Marketing to other institutions
- Marketing to grocery stores
- Developing a regional branding and marketing campaign

8. Support funding for the US Highway 21 and other major road improvements.

The expansion of Highway 21 is critical to economic development in Alleghany County. For agriculture and agribusiness, it will improve access to markets, reduce business transportation costs, increase commercial and tourist traffic, and improve the county's ability to attract and retain other related businesses. County leaders should work with legislative and congressional delegates, the N.C. Department of Transportation and other federal, state and regional agencies to ensure continued funding for the completion of the Highway 21 improvements and additional funding to improve other major roads in the county, while supporting priorities identified in the County's Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

Implementation Responsibility: Alleghany County Commission, Alleghany County Planning Department, Sparta Town Council, Chamber of Commerce and other agencies as needed.

Timeline

Immediate and ongoing until the completion of the highway improvements.

9. Offer continuing education programs for farmers and agribusiness owners.

Education may be the best opportunity Alleghany farmers have to sustain an agricultural economy. Make needed leadership, technical and business training readily available for existing and new farmers and forest landowners through a variety of delivery modes that best fits the landowner's schedule and learning style.

¹⁷ Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project- www.asapconnections.org

Some examples of educational programs are:

- Develop training such as computerized pesticide record-keeping, water and soil quality, farmland preservation, tax credits and value-added products, marketing, financial record keeping.
- Educate farmers and forest landowners on new revenue opportunities such as carbon credits, mineral rights, water rights, energy production, agricultural tourism venues, leased/rental agreements and leasing of land for recreation and hunting.
- Provide business development assistance to farmers, forest landowners and agribusinesses.
- Provide educational programs in transition and estate planning for farm and forest landowners.
- Provide training on production of new commodities and marketing techniques for beginning farmers and encourage enterprise diversification of established farmers.
- Create awareness and encourage farmers, forest land owners and agribusiness owners to become advocates for the industry.

Implementation Responsibility: N.C. Cooperative Extension, Alleghany County; Wilkes and Surry Community College, North Carolina Forest Service, Alleghany County, Alleghany Business Development Center, Commodity Associations, Alleghany County Soil and Water Conservation District; Natural Resources Conservation Service

Timeline: Spring 2014 and continuing

10. Advocate for back taxes collected from farms losing Present Use status to be set aside to help with farmland preservation programs.

There are 88,870 acres currently under Present Use Valuation (PUV) in Alleghany County. This tax deferred program affords landowners some amount of cost control that would otherwise limit their ability to farm profitably. When a landowner fails to meet the requirements for PUV they must pay three years back taxes plus interest. This money generally goes into the county general fund. It is recommended that Alleghany County budget \$30,000 annually to help fund future Farmland Preservation programs. It is the recommendation that a portion of the funds collected from the back taxes and interest from those losing Present Use status be used to fund this line. Alleghany County government will have sole discretion as to where the funds are to be used but will seek advice from the Alleghany Agriculture Advisory Board. One option discussed is the development of a mini-grant process for local farmers and/or organizations.

Implementation Responsibility: Alleghany County Board Of Commissioners, Alleghany County Manager, Alleghany Tax Administrator, Alleghany County Accountant, Alleghany Agriculture Advisory Board

Timeline: Consideration and discussion begin when the Alleghany Farmland Protection Plan is certified by the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and implement during the budgetary planning period for the next fiscal year.

11. Develop an Agricultural Advisory Board comprised of representatives of farmers, all agricultural related boards, agribusinesses, lenders, county government and agencies who work with agriculture.

Agriculture is and hopefully will continue to be, an economic engine in Alleghany County. With the adoption and certification of the Alleghany Farmland Preservation Plan (AFPP) there needs to be an advisory body that meets regularly to oversee the implementation, review periodically and make recommendations.

It is recommended that the board be called the Alleghany Agricultural Advisory Board (AAAB). There are several boards that serve the agricultural community and should be represented on the AAAB. It should be made up of a cross section representative of all farmers, agribusinesses, lenders, county

government and all departments and agencies that work with agriculture. The AAAB could be a current group already organized such as the Allegheny Farmland Preservation Board with expanded responsibilities and membership to meet the AAAB criteria. It is expected that the AAAB develop a meeting schedule, select officers, set board terms at three years with a strict rotation schedule with no member serving more than two terms, develop by-laws and possibly seek 501C3 non-profit status.

The AAAB would serve as a sounding board for agriculture related concerns, review and rewrite the AFPP, follow-up and follow through with the AFPP recommendations, pursue grant opportunities, advise county government in agricultural related issues, and encourage and promote agriculture as a part of any future economic development plans. The AAAB will make periodical reports to county government as to progression with the recommendations of the AFPP. Possible funding from the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund for support may be available.

Implementation Responsibilities: County Government, County Attorney, Agricultural Commodity Groups and Organizations, Farmers, Soil and Water Conservation District Board and staff, Allegheny Farmland Preservation Board, Cooperative Extension Advisory Board, NC Forest Service-Allegheny, Cooperative Extension Agents- Allegheny, Allegheny Farmers Market, Allegheny Agriculture Coalition, Agricultural Lenders, Allegheny Planning, Mapping and Tax Departments, Agribusinesses, others as deemed needed.

Timeline: As soon as the Allegheny Farmland Preservation Plan is adopted and certified all those identified with Implementation Responsibilities will meet to discuss and plan. Implementation expected one year after the Allegheny Farmland Preservation Plan is certified by the NC Department of Agriculture and continue thereafter.



Appendix A: References

NCGS §106-735 et seq.

NCGS §106-744 (c)(1).

NCGS §106-744(e)(1-5).

Walden, Mike, Agricultural and Resource Economics, North Carolina State University, Raleigh.
Agriculture and Agribusiness in Alleghany County 2008 (IMPLAM, Mig. Inc)
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/agecon/counties/alleghany.pdf>

Census of Agriculture, 2007,
http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/North_Carolina/cp37005.pdf

Alleghany Chamber of Commerce, <http://www.sparta-nc.com/>

U.S. Geological Survey Map, Reston, Virginia (Whitehead, NC and Glade Valley, NC quadrangles)

NCDA Agriculture Overview, June, 201. www.ncagr.gov/stats/general/overview.htm

N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, press release, February 2009

2002 Census of Agriculture, North Carolina State and County Data. Washington, D.C. and
2007 Census of Agriculture, North Carolina State and County Data. Washington, D.C.-
www.census.gov

Interview, NC Cooperative Extension, Alleghany Center

Renkow, Mitch. Cost of Community Services. Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, NC State University, 2006. Page2. <http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/wq/lpn/PDFDocuments/alamanceCOCS.pdf>

Blue Ridge Conservancy, <http://blueridgeconservancy.org/>

The model, including GIS maps and a description of rankings, can be found at:
<http://www.ncadfp.org/FarmlandPreservation.htm>

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project- www.asapconnections.org

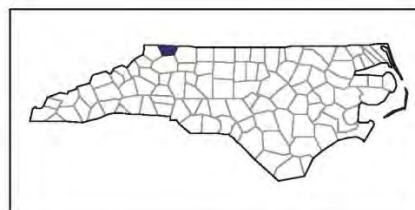
USDA, NRCS Web Soil Survey - <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

Planning For An Agricultural Future: A Guide For North Carolina Farmers and Local Governments,
American Farmland Trust, 2007.
http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/31721/FINAL_NCP4Ag_AFT.pdf

Appendix B: 2007 Census of Agriculture

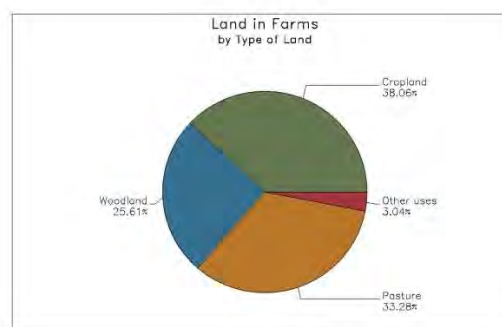
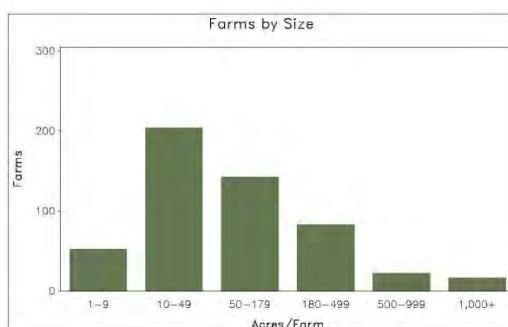
2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

County Profile



Alleghany County North Carolina

	2007	2002	% change
Number of Farms	519	544	- 5
Land in Farms	76,656 acres	72,627 acres	+ 6
Average Size of Farm	148 acres	134 acres	+ 10
Market Value of Products Sold	\$33,994,000	\$23,838,000	+ 43
Crop Sales \$18,530,000 (55 percent)			
Livestock Sales \$15,464,000 (45 percent)			
Average Per Farm	\$65,500	\$43,819	+ 49
Government Payments	\$389,000	\$418,000	- 7
Average Per Farm Receiving Payments	\$5,717	\$5,424	+ 5



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service

www.agcensus.usda.gov

2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

County Profile

Alleghany County – North Carolina

Ranked items among the 100 state counties and 3,079 U.S. counties, 2007

Item	Quantity	State Rank	Universe ¹	U.S. Rank	Universe ¹
MARKET VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SOLD (\$1,000)					
Total value of agricultural products sold	33,994	62	100	1,890	3,076
Value of crops including nursery and greenhouse	18,530	50	100	1,503	3,072
Value of livestock, poultry, and their products	15,464	58	99	1,731	3,069
VALUE OF SALES BY COMMODITY GROUP (\$1,000)					
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	196	83	99	2,346	2,933
Tobacco	(D)	(D)	77	(D)	437
Cotton and cottonseed	-	-	53	-	626
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	(D)	(D)	99	(D)	2,796
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	23	91	98	1,986	2,659
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod	791	73	95	1,187	2,703
Cut Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops	9,562	3	53	8	1,710
Other crops and hay	349	59	100	2,372	3,054
Poultry and eggs	4	92	99	2,754	3,020
Cattle and calves	7,463	12	98	1,425	3,054
Milk and other dairy products from cows	7,911	3	62	568	2,493
Hogs and pigs	-	-	89	-	2,922
Sheep, goats, and their products	15	75	98	2,438	2,998
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys	45	63	96	2,270	3,024
Aquaculture	14	41	60	974	1,498
Other animals and other animal products	12	52	91	1,988	2,875
TOP CROP ITEMS (acres)					
Forage - land used for all hay and haylage, grass silage, and greenchop	10,936	26	100	1,622	3,060
Cut Christmas trees	7,954	2	57	5	1,756
Corn for silage	2,061	6	79	636	2,263
Vegetables harvested for sale	965	29	99	532	2,794
Pumpkins	632	1	65	15	1,716
TOP LIVESTOCK INVENTORY ITEMS (number)					
Cattle and calves	22,469	9	98	1,306	3,060
Goats, all	506	63	99	1,449	3,023
Horses and ponies	438	61	98	2,375	3,066
Colonies of bees	344	25	94	735	2,640
Layers	173	89	99	2,710	3,024

Other County Highlights

Economic Characteristics	Quantity	Operator Characteristics	Quantity
Farms by value of sales:		Principal operators by primary occupation:	
Less than \$1,000	119	Farming	245
\$1,000 to \$2,499	50	Other	274
\$2,500 to \$4,999	57		
\$5,000 to \$9,999	57	Principal operators by sex:	
\$10,000 to \$19,999	74	Male	480
\$20,000 to \$24,999	26	Female	39
\$25,000 to \$39,999	38		
\$40,000 to \$49,999	17	Average age of principal operator (years)	57.7
\$50,000 to \$99,999	31		
\$100,000 to \$249,999	16	All operators by race ² :	
\$250,000 to \$499,999	21	American Indian or Alaska Native	1
\$500,000 or more	13	Asian	-
Total farm production expenses (\$1,000)	29,489	Black or African American	1
Average per farm (\$)	56,819	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	-
		White	753
Net cash farm income of operation (\$1,000)	5,880	More than one race	7
Average per farm (\$)	11,330	All operators of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino Origin ²	3

See "Census of Agriculture, Volume 1, Geographic Area Series" for complete footnotes, explanations, definitions, and methodology.

(D) Cannot be disclosed. (Z) Less than half of the unit shown.

Universe is number of counties in state or U.S. with item. ² Data were collected for a maximum of three operators per farm.

Appendix C: Promotions, Meetings, Surveys and Interviews



Allegheny County Farmland Protection Plan

4 local meetings are scheduled to address current and future needs of farmers and land owners in Allegheny

Meals will be provided

Turkey Knob Community Center
Thursday, January 24 at 7:30 am

Sparta VFW Post No. 7034
Thursday, February 21 at 7:30 am

Glade Creek Volunteer Fire
Department
Thursday, March 21 at 7:30 am

FINAL PLANNING MEETING:

Allegheny Senior Center in Sparta
Thursday, April 11 at 6:00 pm

**To reserve your meal and attend one of these meetings or
to get more information, contact the
Allegheny Soil and Water District office at: 336-372-7777**



LETTER TO FARMERS AND LANDOWNER:

Dear Alleghany Farmer and Landowner,

Alleghany County has a long and proud agricultural tradition. While the landscape of agriculture is ever changing from tobacco and cabbage to Christmas trees, greenery and pumpkins, with forestry, dairy and beef experiencing ups and down agriculture has remained a very important part of the Alleghany economy, selling \$42.6 million of products in 2010.

There are efforts underway to develop more ways that you can voluntarily preserve and protect your farmland to guarantee that Alleghany County will continue having a viable agricultural existence for future generations. The outcome of this effort is to develop an Alleghany Farmland Preservation Plan. Bob Edwards, former Agricultural Extension Director, is coordinating the plan under the supervision of the Alleghany Soil and Water District. This planning is supported by a grant from ADFP, NCDA. The process is also being supported by businesses, and all organizations associated with agriculture.

We need your input in order to make the plan a working document that will benefit the farming community.

There are three breakfast meetings planned to gather your feedback:

1. Turkey Knob Community Center, Thursday, January 24
2. Sparta VFW Post 7034 Thursday, February, 21
3. Glade Creek Volunteer Fire Department, March 21

Breakfast will be served at 7:30 followed by a short program with an opportunity for your feedback.

We are also planning a final meeting on April 11 at 7:00 pm at the Senior Center in Sparta. If you cannot attend any of the breakfast meetings, you are encouraged to join us for dinner and provide your input.

It is very important you call the SWCD at **372-7777** to reserve your meal for whichever meeting you plan to attend; otherwise there may not be enough food for all attendees.

Also, enclosed is a farmer survey. If you are a landowner who rents your farm out please forward the survey to the person who leases your farm. It is very important that we gather as many surveys as possible in order to develop the real picture of farming in Alleghany. Individual information is strictly confidential.

You may complete the survey and bring it with you to either of the meetings, drop it by the Soil and Water District office at 90 South Main Street, mail to **PO Box 127, Sparta, NC 28675** or complete it on-line at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FYRXSMN>



ALLEGHANY FARMLAND PRESERVATION SURVEY

Please DO NOT complete this survey if you are simply a landowner renting farmland to a farmer.

If possible, please forward this to the farmer renting your land.

Individual information is STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL and will only be used in a congregate form.

Please tell us, by township and/or community (ies), where your farm(s) is/are principally located in Alleghany County: _____

How long has your family been in farming? _____

How many total acres of land do you farm within Alleghany County? _____

Of these acres how many do you own? _____ How many do you lease from another landowner? _____

How many acres do you timber? _____

How many total acres of land, if any, do you farm outside of Alleghany County? _____

Ages of those involved in the farming operation:

Male _____, _____, _____, _____ Female _____, _____, _____, _____

Which of the following applies to your farming operation in the next 10 years:

_____ Plan to expand _____ Plan to sell the farm to another farmer

_____ No change _____ Plan to transfer the farm to a relative

_____ Plan to scale back _____ Plan to sell the farm for nonfarm purposes

_____ Other (explain) _____

Do your children plan to continue farming as an occupation? Yes _____ No _____

If no, what plans do you have for the farm when you are no longer able to manage it?

How long to you personally intend to be farming? 1- 5 yrs _____ 5-10 yrs _____ 10-20 yrs _____ 20+yrs _____

Are you a full or part-time farmer? Full _____ part-time _____

Do you have off farm employment? Yes _____ No _____

What percentage of you total household income comes from your farming operation?

0-25% _____ 25-50% _____ 50-75% _____ 75-100% _____

Is any land you farm under the Voluntary Ag District Program? Yes _____ No _____

**ALLEGHANY FARMLAND PRESERVATION
(Farm meeting survey)**



The following are examples of initiatives taken in other counties and states to support agriculture.

Please rate the importance of each of the following to the long-term success of agriculture in Alleghany County. (PLEASE GIVE EACH A SCORE OF “0 TO 5” WITH “0” MEANING UNIMPORTANT AND “5” MEANING EXTREMELY IMPORTANT). Write in any comments you may have.

Farmland Preservation and Support Systems

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ Government support programs | _____ Additional loan/grant financing for preserving farmland |
| _____ Disaster relief payments | _____ Additional right to farm protections |
| _____ Conservation cost share programs | _____ Public funding for forest establishment |
| _____ Agricultural district maintenance/expansion | _____ Public funding for on-farm environmental management |
| _____ Farm/land values | |

Technical Assistance and Practical Training

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| _____ Forest management plan | _____ Securing migrant and other labor |
| _____ Nutrient management | _____ Developing agritourism option |
| _____ Best management practices | _____ Obtaining processing services/value added |
| _____ Pesticide management | _____ On-farm bio-security |
| _____ Organic farming support and training | _____ Grazing system training |
| _____ Agricultural awareness and career training | _____ Energy alternatives |
| _____ Labor management | |

Marketing and Consumer Awareness Assistance

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| _____ Direct marketing of products | _____ Organizing buying/selling groups |
| _____ Development of new products and markets | _____ Creating Community Supported Agriculture |
| _____ Internet website development | _____ Forest product marketing |
| _____ Regional branding of products | _____ Youth agricultural education |
| _____ Identifying and managing risks | _____ Farm neighbor education |
| _____ Consumer “Buy Local” education | _____ Product liability education |
| _____ Promotion of agricultural tourism | |

Farm Management and Taxes

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| _____ Present use value and taxation | _____ Understanding risk and risk management |
| _____ Income tax reform | _____ Estate planning for farm transition |
| _____ Capital gains and estate tax reform | _____ Rising costs of health care |
| _____ Assistance with forward pricing/hedging | _____ Rising costs of property/liability insurance |
| _____ Business planning assistance | _____ Financing availability |

Environmental and Energy Issues

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| _____ On-farm energy use and energy production | _____ “Green Space” retention |
| _____ Environmental regulations (nutrient, soil) | _____ Pesticide usage |
| _____ Environmental regulations (water) | |

Comments:



ALLEGHANY FARM INVENTORY

Crop Acreage in 2012

_____ Christmas Trees	_____ Nursery/Greenhouse
_____ Timberland	_____ Vegetables
_____ Pumpkins	_____ Tobacco
_____ Corn for Silage	_____ Herbs, Perennials, Flowers
_____ Hay	_____ Other Crops: _____

Animal Numbers in 2012

_____ Dairy Cows	_____ Poultry
_____ Dairy Heifers	_____ Hogs and Pigs
_____ Dairy Calves	_____ Horses
_____ Beef Cows	_____ Dairy or Meat Goats
_____ Beef Calves	_____ Sheep/lambs
_____ Beef Yearlings	_____ Other Animals: _____

Other Farm Products Not Captured Above

Please describe. (Example: Greenery made into garland/wreaths/table toppers; Goat milk into cheese; fruit trees, grapes or berries; sugar cane to molasses; bees for honey/pollination) _____

How do you sell what you produce? (Check all that apply)

_____ Sell to a cooperative or dairy/food processor

_____ Sell through auction or to broker, dealer, or third party

_____ Sell directly to consumer (farmers market, Choose and Cut, internet, Community Supported Agriculture)

_____ Sell directly to other businesses or organizations for use in their operations (restaurants, wreath & garland makers)

_____ Sell directly to government, schools, or military bases

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Challenges you face in farming: (Please be specific in your responses)

- a. Politics (price supports, international trade agreements, farm bill)
- b. Laws/regulations (neighbor complaints, pesticide usage, nutrient management, etc.)
- c. Environment (weather, pests, water, soils, etc.)
- d. Economics (input/output costs, marketing, financing, etc.)
- e. Cultural (farming practices, crop selection, cooperation, community, etc.)
- f. Markets (availability, transportation, new markets)
- g. Other

Please provide your ideas:

How can local markets be improved?

What ideas do you have for attracting young people to farming?

What advice would you give to young farmers?

What ideas do you have for alternative agricultural commodities?

Appendix D: Alleghany Volunteer Agricultural District Ordinance

ALLEGHANY COUNTY VOLUNTARY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM ORDINANCE

ARTICLE I

TITLE

This ordinance, adopted by the Board of Commissioners of Alleghany County, North Carolina, shall be known as the **Alleghany County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program**.

ARTICLE II

AUTHORITY

The articles and sections of this program are adopted pursuant to the authority conferred by Article 61 of Chapter 106 of the North Carolina General Statutes.

ARTICLE III

PURPOSE

The purpose of this program is to promote the health, safety, rural agricultural values, and general welfare of the County, and more specifically, increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life; encourage the economic and financial health of farming; increase protection from undesirable, non-farm development; and increase the protection of farms from nuisance suits and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.

ARTICLE IV

JURISDICTION

The jurisdiction of the Alleghany County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Ordinance shall be the unincorporated areas of Alleghany County, which are not included in the extraterritorial jurisdiction of the Town of Sparta, North Carolina.

ARTICLE V

DEFINITIONS

Advisory Board: The Alleghany County Agricultural Advisory Board (hereafter Advisory Board).

Board of Commissioners: The Board of County Commissioners of Alleghany County, North Carolina.

Chairman: Chairman of the Alleghany County Agricultural Advisory Board.

District: A voluntary Agricultural District established under the terms and conditions of this program by the Board of Commissioners (hereafter District or Districts).

ARTICLE VI

QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATION OF FARMLAND

Section 600, Requirements

In order for farmland to qualify for participation under the terms of this program, it shall meet the following requirements:

- (1) The farmland shall be Alleghany County real property;
- (2) The farm property shall be participating in the farm present-use-value taxation program established by G.S. 105-277.2 through 105-277.7, or otherwise determined by the County to meet all the qualifications of this program set forth in G.S. 105-277.3;
- (3) The property shall be certified by the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Cooperative Extension office and the Farm Service Agency, as being a farm on which at least two-thirds of the land is composed of soils that:

- (a) are best suited for providing food, seed, fiber, forage, timber, and horticultural crops, including Christmas trees and ornamentals;
- (b) have good soil qualities;
- (c) are favorable for all major crops common to the County where the land is located;
- (d) have a favorable growing season; and
- (e) receive the available moisture needed to produce high yields for an average of eight out of ten years;

OR

Soils on which at least two-thirds of the land has been actively used in agricultural, horticultural or forestry operations as defined in G.S. 105-277.2 (1), (2) and (3) during each of the five previous years, measured from the date on which the determination must be made as to whether the land in question qualifies;

- (4) The property shall be managed in accordance with the Natural Resources Conservation Service defined erosion control practices that are addressed to highly erodible land; and
- (5) The property shall be the subject of a Conservation Agreement, as defined in G.S. 121-35, between the County and the owner of such land that prohibits non-farm use or development of such land for a period of at least ten years, except for the creation of not more than three lots that meet applicable County watershed and subdivision regulations. The property owner may voluntarily revoke this conservation agreement by submitting a written request to the Board of Commissioners in accordance with Article VIII.

Section 601. Certification

The owner of the farm seeking to qualify his property for participation in the farmland preservation program shall submit written evidence, or certification, that the property conforms to the requirements of Section 600 of this program. This written information shall be submitted to the Chairman of the Advisory Board, or the designated staff person, on forms provided by the Advisory Board. The certification may be submitted at the same time the owner applies for inclusion in a District. This form may be obtained from the Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District office.

ARTICLE VII

APPLICATION, APPROVAL AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

FOR VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Section 700. Creation of Voluntary Agricultural Districts

In order to implement the purposes stated in Article III, this program provides for the creation of Voluntary Agricultural Districts, which shall meet the following standards:

- (1) The District, when initially established, shall contain a minimum of 20 contiguous acres of qualified farmland, OR, two or more qualified farms which each contain a minimum of 10 acres and are located within a mile of each other;
- (2) The landowner(s) requesting inclusion in the District shall execute an agreement with the County to sustain agriculture in the District in accordance with Section 600 (5) of this program. Said agreement shall be in a form which is reviewed and approved by the Advisory Board; and
- (3) For each District created under the terms of this program, one of the existing Advisory Board members shall be assigned to represent the District.
- (4) The District is created to accomplish the Purpose statement set forth in Article III, above.

Section 701. Application to Participate

A landowner wishing to participate in the District may do so by making application to the chairman of the Advisory Board or to a designated staff person. The application shall be on forms provided by the advisory board. The application to participate in a district shall be filed with the certification of qualifying farmland.

Section 702. Approval Process

Upon review by the Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District and/or NRCS staff of the written certification and application submitted by the property owner, the Advisory Board shall meet within 90 days if possible to approve or disapprove the application. The chairman of the Advisory Board shall notify the applicant(s) in writing of said approval or disapproval of participation in the district within 2 weeks of said meeting.

Section 703. Appeal

If the Advisory Board denies an application, the petitioner has 30 days to appeal the decision to the Alleghany County Board of Commissioners. Such appeal shall be presented in writing. The decision of the Board of Commissioners is final.

ARTICLE VIII

REVOCATION OF CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

By written notice to the Advisory Board, a landowner of qualifying farmland may revoke the Preservation Agreement formulated pursuant to Section 600 (5) of this program, or the Advisory Board may revoke same Preservation Agreement based on noncompliance by the landowner. Such revocation shall result in loss of qualifying farm status, and consequently, loss of eligibility to participate in a District and the benefits thereof. Revocation by the Advisory Board of a Preservation Agreement may be appealed by the landowner to the Alleghany County Board of Commissioners within 30 days of notice of revocation. Such appeal shall be presented in writing. The decision of the Board of Commissioners is final. Revocation by a landowner of a Preservation Agreement and the resulting loss of qualifying farmland status for the purpose of participation in a District shall in no way affect the eligibility of the land to be taxed at its present use value as provided in N.C.G.S. 105-277.2 through N.C.G.S. 105-277.6. If a portion of a District is removed for any reason after being established by this program, the remaining qualified farms may remain in the District, provided they meet all other requirements except the minimum area requirements of Section 700 (1).

ARTICLE IX

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

Section 900. Creation

In accordance with N.C.G.S. 106-739, the Board of Commissioners hereby establishes an Agricultural Advisory Board to implement the provisions of this program.

Section 901. Appointments and Membership

The Advisory Board shall consist of 9 members appointed by the Alleghany County Board of Commissioners.

- (1) Requirements
- (a) Each Advisory Board member shall be an Alleghany County resident or landowner.
 - (b) Five of the nine members shall be actively engaged in farming.
 - (c) At least one member shall have special interest, experience, or education in agriculture and/or rural land preservation.
 - (d) At least one of the Advisory Board members actively engaged in farming shall be nominated by the Alleghany County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors.
 - (e) The members shall be selected for appointment by the Board of Commissioners from the names of individuals submitted to the Board of Commissioners by the Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Cooperative Extension Service, the Farm Service Agency Committee and the Alleghany County Farm Bureau with an effort to have the broadest geographical representation possible. (Efforts shall be made to have one member appointed from each of the voting precincts.)
- (2) Tenure. The members are to serve for terms of three years, except that the initial board is to consist of three appointees for a term of one year, three appointees for a term of two years, and three appointees for a term of three years. Thereafter, all appointments are to be for terms of three years, with reappointment permitted. The terms for the initial board members will be determined by lottery.
- (3) Vacancies. Any vacancy on the Agricultural Advisory Board is to be filled by the Board of Commissioners for the remainder of the unexpired term following the same procedure as for the initial appointment.
- (4) Removal. The Board of Commissioners may remove any member of the Agricultural Advisory Board upon a two-thirds vote of the Commissioners. No cause for removal shall be required.
- (5)
- (6) Attendance . Member attendance of the Advisory Board Meetings is very important. Unexcused absence of at least 50% of the meetings in a one-year period constitutes automatic dismissal.

(6) Funding

- (a) *Compensation.* The Board of Commissioners shall fix the per diem compensation, if any, of the Advisory Board.
- (b) *Appropriations for performance of duties.* Funds may be appropriated by the Board of Commissioners to the Advisory Board to perform its duties. A budget request will be presented to the County Commissioners annually.

Section 902. Procedures

The Advisory Board shall adopt rules of procedure, which are consistent with the enabling legislation and other applicable statutes.

- (1) Chairperson. The Advisory Board shall elect a chairperson and vice-chairperson each year at its first meeting of the fiscal year. The chairperson shall preside over all regular or special meetings of the Board. In the absence or disability of the chairperson, the vice-chairperson shall preside and shall have and exercise all the powers of the chairperson so absent or disabled. Additional officers may be elected as needed.
- (2) Jurisdiction and Procedures; Supplementary Rules. The jurisdiction and procedures of the Advisory Board are set out in this article, except that the Board may adopt supplementary rules of procedure not inconsistent with this article or with other provisions of law.
- (3) Advisory Board Year. The Advisory Board shall use the County fiscal year as its meeting year.
- (4) Meetings. Meetings of the Advisory Board, following such notice as required by this article, shall be held at the call of the chairperson and at such other times as the board in its rules of procedure may specify. A called meeting shall be held at least quarterly. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the members of the Advisory Board. All meetings shall be open to the public.
- (5) Voting. All issues shall be decided by a majority vote of the members of the Advisory Board, except as otherwise stated herein.
- (6) Records. The Advisory Board shall keep minutes of the proceedings showing the vote of each member upon each question, or if absent or failing to vote, indicating such fact, and shall keep records of its examinations and other official actions, all of which shall be immediately filed in the office of the board and shall be a public record.

- (7) Administrative Services. The Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District office shall serve the Advisory Board for record keeping, correspondence, and application procedures under this article together with such other services the Board needs to complete its duties.

Section 903. Duties

The Advisory Board shall:

- (1) Review and approve applications for qualified farmland and Districts.
- (2) Hold public hearings pursuant to Article X of this program.
- (3) Advise the Board of Commissioners on projects, programs, or issues affecting the agricultural economy or activities within the County that will affect Agricultural Districts.
- (4) Perform other related tasks or duties assigned by the Board of Commissioners.

ARTICLE X

PUBLIC HEARINGS ON CONDEMNATION OF FARMLAND

Section 1000. Purpose

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. 106-740, no state or local public agency or governmental unit may formally initiate any action to condemn any interest in qualifying farmland within a District until such agency or unit has requested the Advisory Board to hold a public hearing on the proposed condemnation. The procedures for such hearings shall be as set forth below.

Section 1001. Procedures

- (1) Establish Public Hearing. Upon receipt of a request for a public hearing, the Advisory Board shall have 30 days to schedule and conduct a public hearing on the proposed condemnation pursuant to N.C.G.S. 106-740. No formal initiation of condemnation shall occur while the proposed condemnation is properly before the Advisory Board within the time limitations set forth in this section.
- (2) Notice of Public Hearing. The Advisory Board shall run a notice of the public hearing in a newspaper having general circulation in Alleghany County at least 10 days prior to the date established for the hearing. The notice shall contain the date, time and place of the hearing and shall provide the name of the agency requesting the hearing and the purpose of the condemnation.

- (3) Public Hearing. The Advisory Board shall conduct the public hearing and receive information and comments from the agency requesting the condemnation action and the citizens of Alleghany County. Additionally, the Advisory Board shall review the following:
- (a) Has the need for the project requiring the condemnation been satisfactorily shown by the agency requesting the action?
 - (b) Has a financial impact analysis been conducted by the agency seeking the action?
 - (c) Have alternatives been considered to the proposed action that are less disruptive to the agricultural activities and farmland base of the voluntary agricultural district within which the proposed action is to take place?

The Advisory Board shall invite and allow input by the county Cooperative Extension agent, USDA Natural Resources Conservationist, the Farm Service Agency, and Planning Board and may consult with any other individuals, agencies or organizations, public or private, necessary to the board's review of the proposed action. The Advisory Board may, if circumstances require, recess the public hearing for a reasonable time in order to fulfill its purpose. A recess shall not exceed 7 days and not more than 2 recesses shall be granted.

- (4) Findings and Notification. Within 10 days after the public hearing, the Advisory Board shall make a written report containing its findings and recommendations regarding the proposed action. The report shall be conveyed to the decision-making body of the agency proposing acquisition and made available to the public for comment.

ARTICLE XI

LAND USE INCENTIVES TO VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT FORMATION

Section 1100. Purpose

The purpose of this section is to help meet the needs of agriculture as an industry and prevent conflicts between District participants and non-farm landowners in close proximity to Districts.

Section 1101. Public Notification

- (1) The Advisory Board, in cooperation with the County, shall take measures as set forth below to provide notification to property owners, residents, and other interested persons in and adjacent to any designated Agricultural District with a goal of informing all current and potential residents and property owners in and adjacent to a District, that farming and agricultural activities may take place in this district any time during the day or night.
 - (a) Signs identifying approved Districts shall be placed upon the property and along the rights-of-way of major roads in a way calculated to reasonably notify the public and adjoining of the presence of the farm property.
 - (b) Information identifying approved Districts shall be provided to the Alleghany County Register of Deeds office, the Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District, the Cooperative Extension office, the Farm Service Agency, the Alleghany County Planning Department, and the Alleghany County Tax Department.
 - (c) The following notice shall be displayed in a prominent position in the office of the Alleghany County Register of Deeds and the public access area in the Alleghany County Tax Department:

NOTICE TO REAL ESTATE PURCHASERS IN ALLEGHANY COUNTY

AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Alleghany County has established Agricultural Districts to protect and preserve agricultural lands and activities. These Districts have been developed and mapped to inform all purchasers of real property that certain agricultural activities, including but not limited to pesticide spraying, manure spreading, machinery and truck operations, livestock operations, sawing, hunting and similar activities may take place in these districts any time during the day or night. Maps and/or information on the location and establishment of these districts can be obtained from the Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District office.

- (2) Limit of liability -- In no event shall the County or any of its officers, employees, or agents be held liable in damages for any misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance occurring in good faith in connection with the duties or obligations imposed by this ordinance.
- (3) No cause of action -- In no event shall any cause of action arise out of the failure of any person, including a person researching the title of a particular tract to report to any person the proximity of the tract to a qualifying farm or voluntary Agricultural District as defined in this ordinance.

Section 1102. No Districts in Designated Growth Corridors

Agricultural Districts will not be permitted in designated growth corridors, as delineated on the official County planning map without the approval of the Board of Commissioners. Existing Districts located in new growth corridors designated after the effective date of this program may remain, but shall not be expanded within the growth corridor area without the approval of the Board of Commissioners. Districts located in growth corridors designated after the effective date of this program may expand to include adjoining property purchased by a landowner presently participating in the Alleghany County Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program Ordinance, subject to the approval of the Board of Commissioners.

Section 1103. Waiver of Water and Sewer Assessments

- (1) Purpose of Section. The purpose of this section is to help mitigate the financial impacts on farmers by some local and state capital investments unused by farmers.
- (2) Procedure. The waiver procedure shall be as follows:
 - (a) Landowners belonging to voluntary agricultural districts shall not be assessed for, or required to connect to, water and/or sewer systems.
 - (b) Water and sewer assessments shall be held in abeyance, without interest, for farms inside a voluntary agricultural district, until improvements on such property are connected to the water or sewer system for which the assessment was made.
 - (c) When the period of abeyance ends, the assessment is payable in accordance with the terms set out in the assessment resolution.
 - (d) Statutes of limitations are suspended during the time that any assessment is held in abeyance without interest.
 - (e) Assessment procedures followed under G.S. 153A-185 et seq. shall conform to the terms of this article with respect to qualifying farms that entered into preservation agreements while such article was in effect.
 - (f) Nothing in this section is intended to diminish the authority of the County to hold assessments in abeyance under G.S. 153A-201.

ARTICLE XII

NORTH CAROLINA AGENCY NOTIFICATION

Section 1200. Consultation with N.C. Department of Agriculture and Other Agencies

The Advisory Board may consult with the Cooperative Extension office, the Natural Resources Conservation Service office, the Farm Service Agency office, the N.C. Department of Agriculture, and any other such agency it deems necessary to properly conduct its business.

Section 1201. Recording the Program Ordinance

A certified copy of this program ordinance shall be recorded with the North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture's office after adoption. At least once a year, the County shall submit a written report to the Commissioner of Agriculture, including the status, progress and activities of the County's farmland preservation program, and voluntary agricultural districting information regarding:

- (1) Number of landowners enrolled;
- (2) Number of acres applied;
- (3) Number of acres certified;
- (4) Number of acres denied; and
- (5) Date of certification.

ARTICLE XIII

LEGAL PROVISIONS

Section 1300. Severability, Conflict with Other Ordinances and Statutes, and Amendments

- (1) Severability. If any article, section, subsection, clause, phrase or portion of this ordinance is for any reason invalid or unconstitutional as determined by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance.

- (2) Conflict with other ordinances and statutes. Whenever the provisions of this ordinance conflict with other ordinances of Alleghany County, the most restrictive ordinance shall govern. Whenever the provisions of any federal or state statute require more restrictive provisions than are required by this ordinance, the provisions of such statute shall govern.
- (3) Amendments. This ordinance may be amended from time to time after a public hearing, notice of which shall be sent to participants by first class mail 30 days prior to the hearing, and in consultation with the Agricultural Advisory Board to the Board of Commissioners.

ARTICLE XIV

ENACTMENT

The Alleghany County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts and enacts the preceding articles and sections of this ordinance.

Adopted this the 18th day of August, 2003.

ATTEST:

Karen Evans

Clerk to the Board

ALLEGHANY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS:

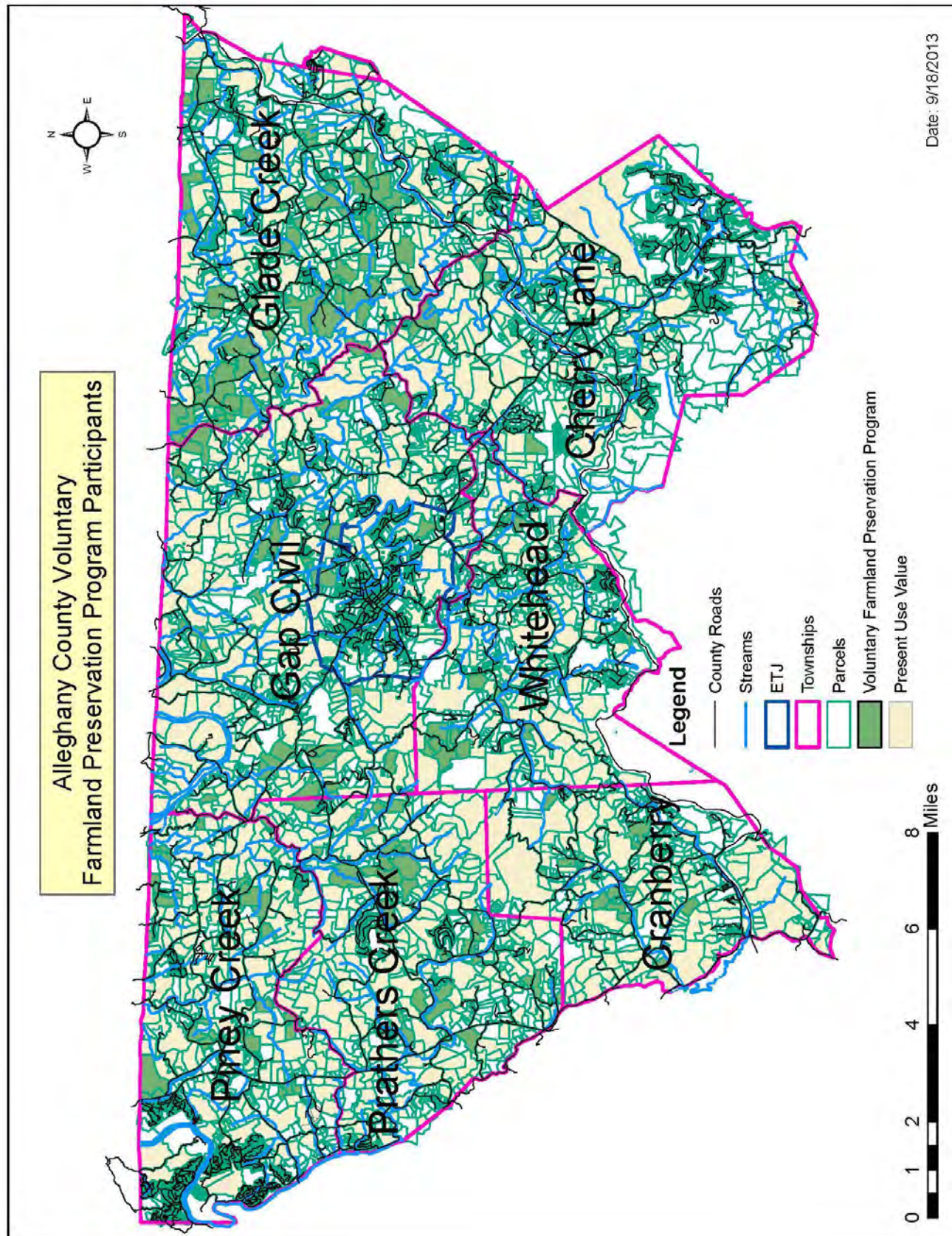
Eldon Edwards, Chair

Warren Taylor, Vice-Chair

Graylen Blevins, Member

Sandy Carter, Member

Patrick Woodie, Member



Appendix E: Stanly County Criteria and Ranking Formula for Preservation

DRAFT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (Stanly County, NC)

In order to be eligible to participate in a County support Purchase of Conservation Easement Program, the applicant property(s) must meet the following basic requirements:

- ☐ AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT: Property must be enrolled in a Voluntary Agricultural District or Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District.
- ☐ DEVELOPABILITY: Applicant property must be developable based on zoning, soils, and other physical characteristics of the property (wetlands, steep slopes, etc.).
- ☐ ENCUMBERANCE: Applicant property may not be wholly encumbered by another restrictive easement or similar encumbrance.
- ☐ SIZE: Applicant property offered as a single easement, or in combination with others, must comprise at least 100 acres. *Note: Individual applicants with fewer than 100 acres must demonstrate that they are contiguous to permanently preserved parcels and will serve a valuable in-fill purpose.*
- ☐ SOILS: Applicant property must contain at least 50 percent Class I, II, III soils or soils classified as “Unique” by the Natural Resource Conservation Service.
- ☐ STEWARDSHIP: Land must have a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan, Forest Management Plan, Nutrient Management Plan, CAFO Plan, or similar plan.
- ☐ TAX STANDING: Must be in good standing with local, state, federal tax authorities.

DRAFT RANKING FORMULA

Once an applicant has passed the initial screening outlined above, the applicant will be ranked against concurrent applications using the following formula. (Maximum score is 160)

Farm Characteristics (Maximum of 60 Points)

1. Soil Quality (Maximum 30 points) _____ Points
 - Applicant property has 60 percent or greater Class I and II soils (30 points)
 - Applicant property has 40 percent to 59 percent Class I and II soils (20 points)
2. Size of Application (Maximum 30 points) _____
 - Application represents more than 200 acres (20 points)
 - Application represents 100 to 199 acres (10 points)
 - Application represents less than 100 acres, but is contiguous to permanently preserved parcels of more than 100 acres (5 points)
 - Application represents contiguous acreage (10 points)

Location Factors (Maximum of 75 points)

5. Adjacency to Agricultural Land (Maximum 20 points) _____ Points
 Applicant property is adjacent to permanently protected land (20 points)
 Applicant property is within ½ mile of permanently protected land (10 points)
 Applicant property is adjacent to actively farmed land (10 points)
6. Adjacency to water and sewer service, highway access points, or principal/major arterial roadway (Maximum 20 points) _____ Points
 Adjacent to water or sewer lines (10 points)
 Adjacent to highway access points or principal/major arterial roadway (10 Points)
 Proximate to (within ½ mile) water or sewer lines (5 Points)
 Proximate to (within ½ mile) highway access points or principal/major arterial roadway (5 Points)
7. Adjacency to developed areas (Maximum 10 points) _____ Points
 Adjacent to Municipalities and designated development areas (10 points)
 Adjacent to Extraterritorial Jurisdictions (5 points)
8. Road Frontage (Maximum 10 points) _____ Points
 Total feet of road frontage (up to 5,000 feet) ____/500
9. Development Pressure (Maximum 5 points) _____ Points
 Town growth rate (5-yr simple average of new housing units) exceeds County growth rate. (5 points)
10. Adjacency to critical environmental areas or unique natural resources (Maximum 10 points) _____ Points
 Adjacent to or within a critical or unique environmental resource (e.g. Tillery or Badin watershed, Uwharrie National Forest, etc.) (10 Points)

Discretionary Points (Maximum of 25 points) _____ Points

At the County's discretion, it may award up to 25 points to an applicant's ranking score based on qualitative considerations or specific localized conditions at the time of the application. The rationale for awarding such points should be clearly delineated and may include factors such as:

- Value of the easement purchase (cost of easement relative to appraised value)
- Consistency of application with County, town, and municipal plans
- Imminent sale or intergenerational transfer
- Operational continuity
- Exceptional scenic value
- Economic productivity
- Cultural or historic significance
- Farm contains important agricultural infrastructure

Appendix F: Prime and Important Farmland

<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

This table lists the map units in the survey area that are considered important farmlands. Important farmlands consist of prime farmland, unique farmland, and farmland of statewide or local importance. This list does not constitute a recommendation for a particular land use.

In an effort to identify the extent and location of important farmlands, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, in cooperation with other interested Federal, State, and local government organizations, has inventoried land that can be used for the production of the Nation's food supply.

Prime farmland is of major importance in meeting the Nation's short- and long-range needs for food and fiber. Because the supply of high-quality farmland is limited, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recognizes that responsible levels of government, as well as individuals, should encourage and facilitate the wise use of our Nation's prime farmland.

Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. It could be cultivated land, pastureland, forestland, or other land, but it is not urban or built-up land or water areas. The soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for the soil to economically produce sustained high yields of crops when proper management, including water management, and acceptable farming methods are applied. In general, prime farmland has an adequate and dependable supply of moisture from precipitation or irrigation, a favorable temperature and growing season, acceptable acidity or alkalinity, an acceptable salt and sodium content, and few or no rocks. The water supply is dependable and of adequate quality. Prime farmland is permeable to water and air. It is not excessively erodible or saturated with water for long periods, and it either is not frequently flooded during the growing season or is protected from flooding. Slope ranges mainly from 0 to 6 percent. More detailed information about the criteria for prime farmland is available at the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For some of the soils identified in the table as prime farmland, measures that overcome a hazard or limitation, such as flooding, wetness, and droughtiness, are needed. Onsite evaluation is needed to determine whether or not the hazard or limitation has been overcome by corrective measures.

A recent trend in land use in some areas has been the loss of some prime farmland to industrial and urban uses. The loss of prime farmland to other uses puts pressure on marginal lands, which generally are more erodible, droughty, and less productive and cannot be easily cultivated.

Unique farmland is land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, such as citrus, tree nuts, olives, cranberries, and other fruits and vegetables. It has the special combination of soil quality, growing season, moisture supply, temperature, humidity, air drainage, elevation, and aspect needed for the soil to economically produce

sustainable high yields of these crops when properly managed. The water supply is dependable and of adequate quality. Nearness to markets is an additional consideration. Unique farmland is not based on national criteria. It commonly is in areas where there is a special microclimate, such as the wine country in California.

In some areas, land that does not meet the criteria for prime or unique farmland is considered to be farmland of statewide importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. The criteria for defining and delineating farmland of statewide importance are determined by the appropriate State agencies. Generally, this land includes areas of soils that nearly meet the requirements for prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some areas may produce as high a yield as prime farmland if conditions are favorable. Farmland of statewide importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by State law.

In some areas that are not identified as having national or statewide importance, land is considered to be farmland of local importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oilseed crops. This farmland is identified by the appropriate local agencies. Farmland of local importance may include tracts of land that have been designated for agriculture by local ordinance.

All areas are prime farmland. 

Farmland of local importance. 

Farmland of statewide importance. 

Alleghany County, North Carolina

Map Symbol	Map Unit Name	Farmland Classification
Ad	Alluvial land, wet (Nikwasi)	Not prime farmland
AhE	Ashe fine sandy loam, 10 to 25 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
AhF	Ashe fine sandy loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
AsF	Ashe stony fine sandy loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
AsG	Ashe stony fine sandy loam, 45 to 65 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
CaE	Chandler silt loam, 10 to 25 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
CaF	Chandler silt loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
CdF	Chandler stony silt loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland

Alleghany County, North Carolina

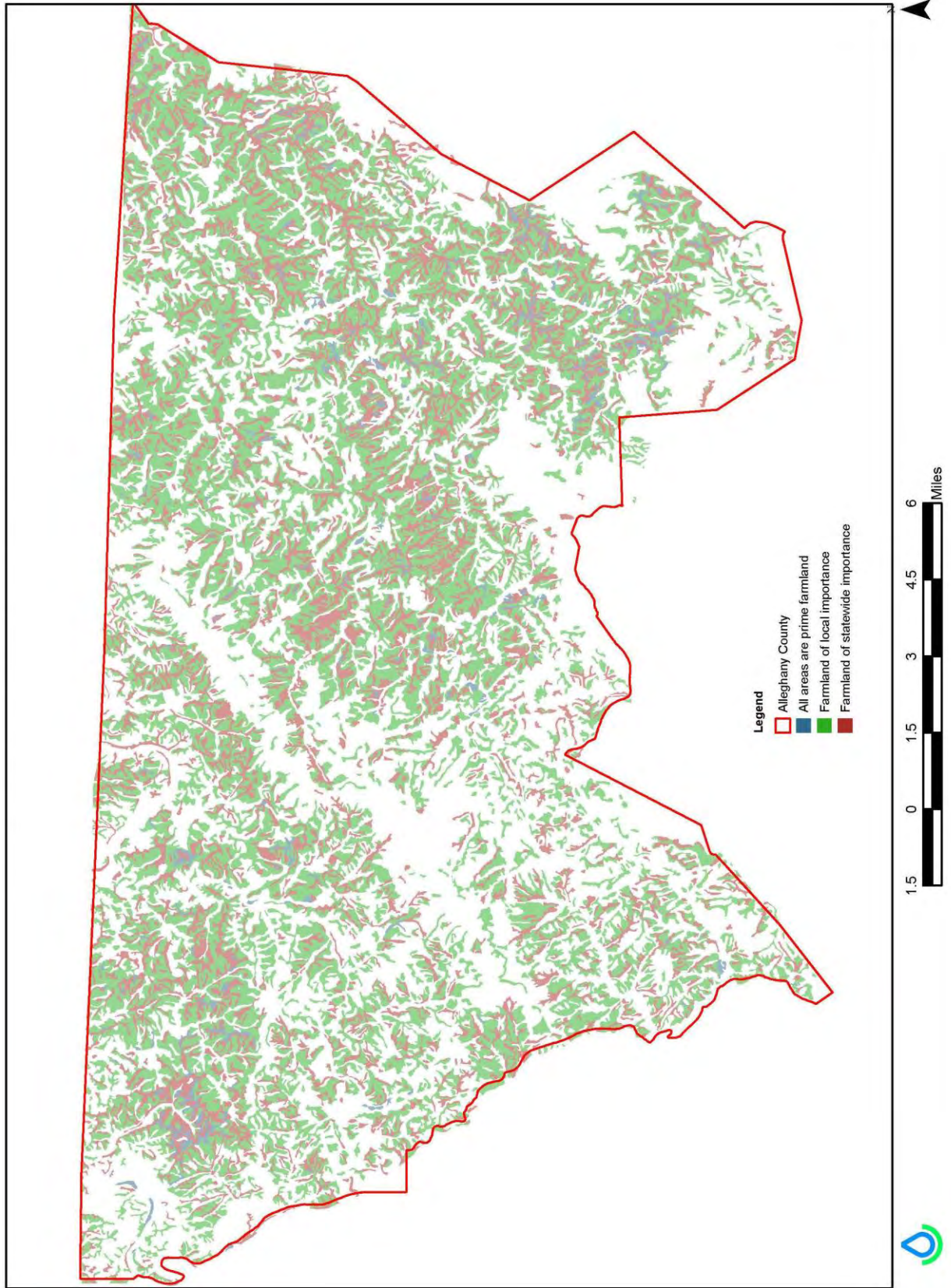
CdG	Chandler stony silt loam, 45 to 65 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
CeB	Chester loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
CeC	Chester loam, 6 to 10 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
CeE	Chester loam, 10 to 25 percent slopes	Farmland of local importance
CeF	Chester loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
ChF2	Chester clay loam, 15 to 45 percent slopes, eroded (Evard)	Not prime farmland
ClD	Chester stony loam, 10 to 15 percent slopes (Evard)	Not prime farmland
ClF	Chester stony loam, 15 to 45 percent slopes (Evard)	Not prime farmland
CmC	Clifton loam, 6 to 10 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
CmE	Clifton loam, 10 to 25 percent slopes	Farmland of local importance
CmF	Clifton loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
CsF	Clifton stony loam, 15 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
Cx	Codorus complex (Arkaqua)	Prime farmland if drained and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season
Cy	Comus fine sandy loam (Rosman)	Prime farmland if protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season
FnC2	Fannin silt loam, 6 to 10 percent slopes, eroded	Farmland of statewide importance
FnE2	Fannin silt loam, 10 to 25 percent slopes, eroded	Farmland of local importance
FnF	Fannin silt loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
FoF2	Fannin silty clay loam, 15 to 45 percent slopes, eroded	Not prime farmland
Gp	Gravel pit	Not prime farmland
Gu	Gullied land	Not prime farmland
HaC	Hayesville loam, 6 to 10 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
HaE	Hayesville loam, 10 to 25 percent slopes	Farmland of local importance

Alleghany County, North Carolina

PoE	Porters loam, 10 to 25 percent slopes	Farmland of local importance
PoF	Porters loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
PsE	Porters stony loam, 10 to 25 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
PsF	Porters stony loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
PsG	Porters stony loam, 45 to 65 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
Ro	Rock outcrop	Not prime farmland
StF	Stony steep land	Not prime farmland
Su	Suncook loamy sand (Biltmore)	Prime farmland if irrigated and either protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season
TaB	Tate loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes	All areas are prime farmland
TaC	Tate loam, 6 to 10 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
TaD	Tate loam, 10 to 15 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
TIC	Tusquitee loam, 6 to 10 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
TID	Tusquitee loam, 10 to 15 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
TIE	Tusquitee loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes	Farmland of local importance
TsD	Tusquitee stony loam, 10 to 15 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
TsE	Tusquitee stony loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
W	Water	Not prime farmland
WaC	Watauga loam, 6 to 10 percent slopes	Farmland of statewide importance
WaE	Watauga loam, 10 to 25 percent slopes	Farmland of local importance
WaF	Watauga loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland
WsF	Watauga stony loam, 15 to 45 percent slopes	Not prime farmland ¹⁸

¹⁸ <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>

Allegheny County Soils of Importance



Appendix G: Potential Funding Sources

New ideas often cost money, and farmers and communities are constantly in search of new funding sources. While there is always more need for capital than its availability, the following options are worth considering in North Carolina. Their priorities and funding cycles change over time, so potential applicants should contact these sources directly for guidelines and deadlines.

Golden Leaf Foundation – <http://www.goldenleaf.org>

Supports projects to strengthen North Carolina's long-term economy, especially in communities that have been tobacco dependent and economically distressed.

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – <http://www.ncagr.com/>

Provide services that promote and improve agriculture, agribusiness and forests; protect consumers and businesses; and conserve farmland and natural resources for the prosperity of all North Carolinians.

North Carolina Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund–

<http://www.ncadfp.org/index.htm>

Provides a full range of services to the state's farmers, including periodic grant or loan programs targeted at specific activities, such as farmers' markets, farmland preservation, specialty crops or small-scale dairy pasteurizers.

Blue Ridge Conservancy – <http://blueridgeconservancy.org/>

Permanently protects land and water resources with agricultural, ecological, cultural, recreational and scenic value in Northwest North Carolina.

Project for Public Spaces – <http://www.pps.org/markets/>

Provides funding for farmers' market development as part of efforts to increase farmer incomes and community partnerships.

Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI-USA) Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund–

<http://rafiusa.org/programs/tobacco-communities-reinvestment-fund/>

Offers technical and cost-share support to innovative producers and communities to help them take advantage of local resources and opportunities.

Tobacco Trust Fund – <http://www.tobaccotrustfund.org/>

Assists farmers and others engaged in North Carolina's tobacco economy by the funding of programs that support, foster, encourage and facilitate a strong agricultural economy in North Carolina or otherwise address needs in the tobacco related segment of the state's economy.

USDA Farm Services Agency –

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=fsahome&subject=landing&topic=landing>

Provides farm ownership and operating loans to farmers and ranchers who cannot obtain commercial credit from a bank, Farm Credit System institution or other lender. Includes specific programs targeted at socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers.

USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) – <http://www.southernsare.uga.edu/>

Provides grants and information to improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life, with separate programs targeted for producers, researchers, professionals and communities.

USDA Value-Added Producer Grants – http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_VAPG.html

Provides grants for planning activities and for working capital for marketing value-added agricultural products and for farm-based renewable energy.

Farm Credit System – <http://www.farmcredit.com/> A nationwide financial cooperative that lends money and provides financial services to agriculture and rural America.

Locally, Carolina Farm Credit serves Alleghany County–

<http://www.carolinafarmcredit.com/cfc3/index.asp>.

Commercial Lenders–Commercial banks are showing an increasing level of interest in innovative agricultural projects. Even if your banker isn't familiar with evaluating a unique new enterprise, a colleague in another state might be.¹⁹

North Carolina Agriculture Cost Share Program (NCACSP) –

<http://www.ncagr.gov/SWC/costshareprograms/ACSP/index.html> This program offers reimbursement incentives to farmers and other landowners for installing and practicing conservation methods and best management practices that address non-point water pollution created by agriculture. Contact the Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District for more information.

North Carolina Forest Stewardship Plan Program–

http://www.ncforestservice.gov/Managing_your_forest/fspp.htm

This program is administered by the North Carolina Forest Service and provided assistance to forest landowners in developing stewardship management plans for timber production, wildlife management, recreational opportunities, water quality and natural beauty.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) –

<http://www.ncagr.gov/SWC/costshareprograms/CREP/index.html>

CREP is a joint effort of the NC Division of Soil and Water Conservation, the NC Water Management Trust Fund, the Ecosystem Enhancement Program and the Farm Service Agency to address water quality problems.

¹⁹ Planning For An Agricultural Future: A Guide For North Carolina Farmers and Local Governments, American Farmland Trust, 2007. http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/31721/FINAL_NCP4Ag_AFT.pdf

Clean Water Management Trust Fund (CWMTF) – www.cwmtf.net

CWMTF is a voluntary, incentive-based water quality program to help local government, state agencies and conservation non-profit groups finance projects to protect and restore surface water quality. Farm and forest landowners are eligible to receive monies for sale of the development rights under certain guidelines.

North Carolina Conservation Tax Credit– <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/ctc/home>

This program allows a credit against individual and corporate income taxes when real property is donated for conservation purposes.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – <http://www.nc.nrcs.usda.gov/>

“Helping People Help the Land” NRCS provides technical, planning and financial assistance to establish the best conservation plans and resource-use decisions for all landscapes.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) –

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=copr&topic=crp>

CRP is a cost share program administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency to encourage farmers to convert highly erodible cropland and other environmentally sensitive land to vegetative cover such as wildlife plantings, trees, filter strips, habitat buffers or riparian buffers.

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) – www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip

EQIP pays 75-90% of the cost for producers to implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. It is open to any producer engaged in livestock, forestry, or crop production on eligible land and provides technical and financial assistance to plan, design and install approved conservation practices.

Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) – www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip

WHIP is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service to provide both technical and financial assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Farm and Ranch Land Protection program (FRPP) – www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/frpp/

FRPP provides matching funds for qualified farms to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and ranchland in agricultural uses. It is managed by Natural Resources Conservation Service. FRPP provides up to 50% of the fair market value of the conservation easement for qualifying farms.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) –

www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp

Natural Resources Conservation Service provides financial and technical assistance to eligible producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air and related natural resources on their land.

Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) – www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp

EWP was created to respond to emergencies caused by natural disasters. There are two components to EWP which are a cost-share component and a floodplain easement component.

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) –

http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/comments_flep.shtml

FLEP provides for technical, educational and cost-share assistance to promote sustainability of non-industrial private forest lands. It emphasizes practices that will improve the condition of an existing forest stand. Participants must own at least 5 acres of forestland and meet certain criteria to be eligible.

USDA Rural Development– <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/Home.html>

Rural Development funds a broad array of programs in rural communities through grants and loans that include economic development, technical assistance and essential services.

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) – www.arc.gov

ARC funds projects to increase job opportunities, strengthen the capacity of people to compete in the global economy, and develop and improve the region's infrastructure to make the region economically competitive.

The Resourceful Communities Program, The Conservation Fund–

<http://www.resourcefulcommunities.org>

Resourceful Communities has worked for the over 15 years in distressed communities throughout North Carolina to build successful working partnerships with more than 165 grassroots organizations. This program focuses on a triple bottom line approach that addresses sustainable community economic development, environmental conservation and social justice. A major emphasis is on capacity building for local organizations in rural communities.

The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation– <http://www.zsr.org>

ZSR focuses on program areas that include community economic development and the environment. It is one of the oldest and most well-established foundations in North Carolina.

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP–

www.asapconnections.org

A non-profit organization located in Asheville, ASAP is working to create and expand local food markets that will preserve agricultural heritage, provide fresh and healthy food, and keep farmers farming. ASAP is working to link family farms to institutional food buyers such as schools and hospitals, has helped to establish tailgate markets, provides marketing assistance through workshops, and publishes a local food guide every year.



Appendix H: Informational and Other Sources

Alleghany Soil and Water Conservation District– http://www.alleghanycounty-nc.gov/soil_and_water_conservation_district.php

NC Cooperative Extension Service, NC State University– <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/>

NC Cooperative Extension Program, A&T State University <http://www.ncat.edu/academics/schools-colleges1/saes/cooperative-extension/Programs/index.html>

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services– <http://www.ncagr.gov/index.htm>

North Carolina Forest Service– <http://www.ncforestservice.gov/>

NCDACS Division of Soil and Water Conservation– <http://www.ncagr.gov/SWC/>

National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service– <https://attra.ncat.org/>

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education– <http://www.sare.org/>

Agriculture in North Carolina– <http://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/ghl/themes/may.html>

North Carolina FFA (Future Farmers of America)– <http://ncffa.org/>

North Carolina in the Global Economy– http://www.soc.duke.edu/NC_GlobalEconomy/index.shtml

North Carolina Wine– <http://www.ncwine.org/>

United States Department of Agriculture– <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome>

National Agriculture Law Center– <http://new.nationalaglawcenter.org/>

Agritourism, North Carolina Department of Agriculture–
<http://www.ncagr.gov/ncproducts/CatSubDirectory.asp?CatNum=1011>

US Census of Agriculture– <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/index.php>

North Carolina Agriculture Statistics, NCDA– <http://www.ncagr.gov/stats/>

United States Agricultural Information Network– <http://usain.org/links2.html>

Agriculture Network Information Collaborative– www.agnic.org

Agriculture News– www.agriculture.com

Alternative Farming Systems Information Center– <http://afsic.nal.usda.gov>

National Agricultural Library– www.nal.usda.gov

Agricultural Marketing Resources Center– www.agmrc.org

Agricultural Link– <http://www.agriculturallink.com/>

Beginning Farmer– <http://www.beginningfarmers.org/>

Food Routes, Buy Local– <http://foodroutes.org/>

Local Harvest– <http://www.localharvest.org/index.jsp>

New River Organic Growers - <http://www.newrivergrowers.com/>

National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition– <http://sustainableagriculture.net/>

Central Appalachian Network - <http://www.cannetwork.org/>

Organic Materials Review Institute– <https://www.omri.org/>

Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture - <http://www.brwia.org/>

Eco Farm– <http://www.eco-farm.org/>

Blue Ridge Seeds of Change - <http://www.blueridgeseedsofchange.org/>

Acres U.S.A. -<http://www.acresusa.com/magazines/magazine.htm>

Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) – <http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/>

Behavioral Education for Human Animal Vegetation and Ecosystem Management (BEHAVE) – <http://extension.usu.edu/behave/>

NC Department of Commerce– <http://www.nccommerce.com>

NC Department of Revenue– <http://www.dor.state.nc.us/>